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COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

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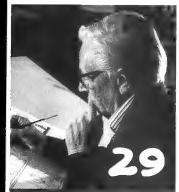
No. 100
March 2003



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The One-Hundredth Issue! Ta-Da! (trumpets flourish)

I think that any monthly publication that reaches 100 issues is something to be proud of. It is a tribute to former editor Gary Carter and his crew, who guided the magazine through its first 83 issues, and to Steve Geppi, who has continued to support *CBM* through thick and thin.

To continue to survive, a magazine needs to evolve. It might need to broaden its scope, or to narrow its focus. In this evolution the editor seeks out interesting articles and features, which he hopes will appeal to a majority of the readers who are supporting the magazine. And, times change. The business of collecting has changed, and mostly for the better.

Most of us started out on this journey as a nostalgia trip, one that would keep us in touch with that ten-year-old we didn't want to completely forget about. In my case, I wanted only to complete a collection of my favorite comics, EC comics. New Trend only. At the time I was reading ECs, from around 1951 through 1955, I was in high school right here in West Plains, Missouri. Once I discovered ECs I pretty much lost interest in other comics.

But I digress. My point here is that all I was interested in at first was collecting a set of New Trend ECs. But once I completed that collection, a moment of panic came when I realized that the search was over, the collection was complete, there was nothing left to do. But I was really enjoying the hobby of collecting! So, I started collecting other stuff that was related, like original art, newspaper sections, even old movie posters from my favorite childhood movies. And as I branched out into these other areas, it was a learning process. Soon, it was more than just nostalgia, it was the enjoyment of an art form which we call the comics.

And that's what we all have in common—we all enjoy the art form of comics in its broadest sense. And compared to other art forms like composing and playing music, writing prose and poetry, painting, dancing, sculpting, etc., this one is in its adolescence if not its infancy.

CBM started out focusing on Golden Age DC comic books. If the focus had remained that narrow, *CBM* would not still be alive today. The scope of the magazine had to be broadened to encompass all comic book collectors. And as time goes on, this process must continue, so when you see articles in this magazine about newspaper comics, Big Little Books, toys, etc., give them a chance! Broaden your outlook!

Russ Cochran
Editor/Publisher

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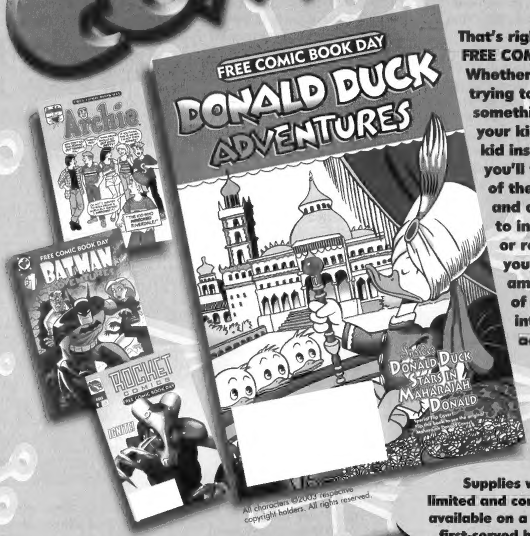

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Point by point

I've read a couple old issues of your mag and seven of the last ten.

Even so, *Alter Ego* and *Comic Book Artist* are *automatic* buys for me whenever I can find them at Jumpgate Comics in Portsmouth, NH—*CBM* is not.

It was the great article on Harvey horror [#91] that first made me spend money; the text and illos worked together to tell me about a part of comic history I knew little about.

The most overall satisfying issue (I'm using your back issue ad to prompt my feeble memory) featured Craig and Chesler. I may never lay hands on a Chesler comic, so it was great seeing all the great covers and I didn't mind following the business machinations behind the scenes. The Craig story conveyed real affection and insight for the artist's work. Jeez, anyone who feels Foster, Raymond, and Caniff articles don't belong in a magazine about comics is taking an awfully narrow approach to the hobby and doesn't appreciate true masters of comic artistry. I don't feel investigations of Winsor McKay, Capp, or McManus are really out of place....

A recent frustrating article [#95] was the slapdash run-on article on Disney strips. The author tried to squeeze every artist and writer's name in, so much that the importance of individual contributions ended up buried under a flood of useless data. The illos separately were fine but poorly integrated with the story; the captions were markedly unhelpful. I felt let down here by both author and editorial staff.

Now, about the current issue [#97], ranked: overall, a "6." Individually: Harvey's Patterson stuff was a pleasant surprise. I don't know if the comparison to John Held Jr. rings true, and the one Held illo isn't a fair comparison (it barely looks like a woman), but he's a good artist.

This month's "Greatest Comic Book Ever" gets points for the insight into *Sugar and Spike*.

The Swan book review makes me want to buy the book, the version with the Murphy Anderson autograph. That's high praise.

Curt Swan was a solid, dependable, unexciting workman who deserves recognition, certainly, if never great lauding. Swan was a prime example of the stodgy "establishment" Adams and the '70s new wave artists rebelled against. Zeno's first article was as much about Zeno and book publication as about Swan, a little disappointing. The interview was ultimately quite good, though I wasn't sure of the connection to Swan until halfway through.

The Shooter interview was also surprisingly good! Not something I would have ever bought a magazine for and yet I found a new respect and new perspective for Shooter.

I like the letters column better when there are more complaints. This one was too much like a DC letter col from the '60s, though Cook's point about Bob Oskner is well taken. Sometimes it seems, like this time, to be all filler.

The Ordway picture was sensational, and the Wood covers stand up well. I guess the articles were "okay." I don't know I learned much about Wood or the characters I didn't know before, and Severin was too kind about when the series went from good to crap. The later wrangling over the rights to the Tower characters was so heated I remain wary of Carbanaro on principle. Incidentally, is there a connection between Severin and John Severin? (Another artist worth a look, if it hasn't been done already, and perhaps more timely with the upcoming Rawhide Kid debacle).

"Nolan's Notebook" is usually a delightful romp.... This month's was less successful. Data does not equal entertainment. I can do math all by myself, thank you.

The "Naiman Report" was better than usual; the strip was amusing.

I don't give a damn about book futures or statues. I can tolerate these things if that's what it takes for you to keep turning out the other stuff.

Respectfully,

Steve Gauthier
via e-mail

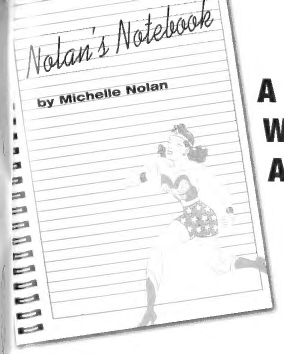
Thanks for your input, Steve. I guess other readers will notice that you are in favor of some of our "diversions," like our features on Foster, Raymond and Caniff. We will continue to throw a spotlight on newspaper comic strips from time to time, not only because they were the forerunners of modern comic books, but also because artists like these three, who never drew a comic book page, had such a profound influence on the artists who gave birth to comic books. You go on to say that you don't care about statues or book reviews, but we do get letters from those who want us to keep those features! We knew, going in, that we were not going to please everyone with each feature in CBM, *so we try our best to strike a happy medium. 'Cause if there ever was one, comic books is a happy medium!*

RC

What he wants

Just a note to let you know for the first time since I started buying *CBM* with

[continued on page 78]



A Much Ignored Milestone, When 100 was Usually Just Another Number

The 100th issue of a comic book in the 1940s and '50s was either ignored or noted only in passing far more often than it was celebrated as a milestone.

That's why, to help celebrate this 100th issue of *CBM*, I thought it would be appropriate to do a follow-up of a column I wrote more than six years ago.

In that column in *CBM* #42 (Dec 1996), I listed the dates of the 100th issues that appeared during the Golden Age and the ensuing ten years or so, through the 1950s, along with a listing of faux 100th issues that really were titles continued from a previous title's numbering.

I received numerous comments about that column—apparently this is a popular area of collecting—not the least of which was, "Where was *Batman* #100 on your list?" Somehow, even though *Batman* was one of the few titles actually to celebrate its 100th issue with a special cover, and even though I mentioned it in the column, I left it off the list!

Thus, the correct number of true 100th issues of comic books published from 1942 (*Famous Funnies* #100) through 1959 is 66 issues, not 65 as I counted in *CBM* #42.

I now have more than half of those 100th issues represented in my collection—several were acquired since I wrote my first column on the topic—and have taken notes on most of the rest, in addition to using the *Gerber Photo-Journals* to spot what a few others looked like.

It's mind-boggling to note that out of those 66 issues, I have learned that apparently only eight of them truly celebrated their 100th issues! These were (in order) *Famous Funnies*, *Big Shot Comics*, *Whiz Comics*, *Captain Marvel Adventures*, *Captain Marvel Junior*, *Superman*, *Batman* and *Blondie*.

There are a handful I still haven't had the chance to see, including *Tip Top*, *Joe Palooka*, *Dagwood*, *Felix the Cat* and *Sad Sack*, so it's conceivable the number of celebratory issues could be a few more than eight—covering the entire first 25 years of newsstand comics. But it can't be many more than a mere eight.

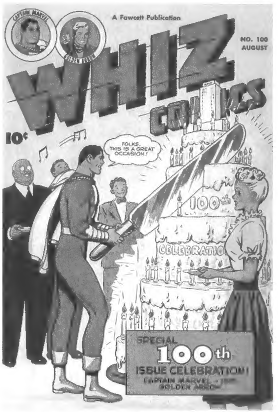
In several other cases, especially those published by National Comics (DC), a small notation such as "100th smash issue!" appeared on the cover. But real, honest-to-goodness birthday celebrations? Not really!

Basically, I feel this shows the degree to which comic books were anything but niche publications in the 1940s and '50s, when surveys showed that well over three-quarters of all children (and plenty of adults) read at least a few comics each month. With the vast majority of newsstand comics selling from 100,000 to 300,000 copies—and many titles sold a lot better than that—most publishers apparently figured a 100th issue would sell just as well whether that fact was celebrated or not.

It's difficult to imagine, however, that so many icons of the comic book world—many of them top sellers—made no celebration whatsoever of their 100th issues, other than the number appearing on the cover.

Comics that utterly ignored their milestone issues—and remember, 100th issues were uncommon in those days—included *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories*, *Looney Tunes*, *Popular* and *Super Comics* from Dell, and flagship titles *Archie* and *Pep Comics* from the Archie Series.

By the end of 1959, National Comics had such a proven record of stability that the company had published no fewer than seventeen 100th issues! This includes *Hopalong Cassidy* #100,



***Whiz* #100 (Aug 1948), a scarce issue, and one of the few 100s to celebrate.**

which was the 15th issue from National after Fawcett produced the first 85. However, the list also includes *Blackhawk* #108 (Jan 1957), which was the fist DC issue after 99 under Quality Comics (*Blackhawk* #9 was the first issue, following the eight-issue run of *Uncle Sam*).

Dell Comics published eleven 100th issues; first with the anthology titles *Popular, New Funnies, Super, Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* and *Looney Tunes;* then in the 1950s with the single-character titles *Red Ryder, Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, Lone Ranger, Marge's Little Lulu* and *Tarzan*.

Harvey was next in line, all in the 1950s after becoming one of the big guns of that decade following more modest successes in the 1940s. By the end of 1959, Harvey had hit the 100 mark with *Dick Tracy* (the first 24 came from Dell), *Blondie* (the first 15 were from David McKay), *Joe Palooka, Dagwood, Sad Sack* and *Felix the Cat*, although it took three companies to feed Felix, who was licensed, like so many other comic book characters. Dell published *Felix* #1-19 and Toby #20-61 before Harvey picked up the license in 1955 when Toby expired.

Those three companies accounted for nearly half the 100th issues, but no fewer than 14 other companies published at least one legitimate No. 100, including four from Fawcett and Quality (let's count *Blackhawk*). Quality made no notion of its 100th productions, but Fawcett celebrated three.

Fawcett, however, provided one of the major mysteries in comics history in this regard. The company's first 100th issue was the August 1948, issue of *Whiz*, featuring one of three "birthday cake" covers of the 1940s and '50s celebrating #100 (the others were *Famous Funnies* and *Big Shot*). Yet *Master Comics* #100 (Feb 1949) did not celebrate its milestone at all! That's baffling—why would the editors make a big deal of *Whiz* #100 and nothing at all of sister anthology title *Master* #100 only six months later?

By the way, *Whiz* #100 is scarce, even though few collectors are aware of how difficult it can be to find. I have seen very few copies of this issue, perhaps because it's so obviously collectible that people want to hold onto it.

Whiz #100 contains a charming parody story, "Captain Marvel and the Hundred Horrors," in which Sivana, "the world's wickedest villain," crashes *Whiz*'s 100 party. Sivana appears just as Billy Baston is about to introduce the 100th guest at the party—Captain Marvel, of course. But Sivana shoots "dimensional lighting" at Billy just as he cries "Shazam!" and the lightening mix-up sends Captain Marvel to another world.

All's well that ends well, of course. Captain Marvel ends the tale with this speech: "Well, folks! Billy Batson and I have been with *Whiz* long enough to celebrate this 100th occasion! We'll be there with *Whiz* for at least a hundred more of the same! And we hope you will be with us, too!" Alas, *Whiz* was to last only another 55 issues and five more years before Captain Marvel vanished into limbo until DC brought him back with *Shazam* #1 (Feb 1973).

Can it really be 30 years since Captain Marvel returned? Egads! Think about it: When Captain Marvel returned, the first issue of *Whiz* was only 33 years old—and we all thought it was a genuine relic then!

Interestingly enough, both *Captain Marvel Adventures* #100 (Sep 1949) and *Captain Marvel Junior* #100 (Sep 1951) featured book-length novels in the never-ending fight against Sivana and Sivana Junior. The *Captain Marvel Junior* tale made no mention of #100, although the cover celebrated the fact, but the *Captain Marvel Adventures* issue celebrated "A Colossal Centennial Thriller. Dr. Sivana and the Plot Against the Universe."

This fanciful 33-page epic, which retold the origin of Captain Marvel, did not otherwise mention the "100 theme" until the last panel. Captain Marvel, along with Tawky Tawny the talking tiger, the spirit of Shazam, Billy Batson and even Savana all assured the reader that Captain Marvel would fly for another 100 issues. Alas, the title was destined to last only another 50 issues

CAPT. MARVEL
MY UNCLE'S MY ENEMIES SMASHED ALL THE SWORDS, AND ALSO HIMSELF! WELL, THAT TAKES CARE OF THAT!
FAITHFUL CAPTAIN MARVEL!
THE UNIVERSE IS SAFE AGAIN! NOW TO ENJOY MY LIFE BACK ON EARTH BY PUTTING BURNS, KEENAN, BANKS!
FOLKS, THIS IS ISSUE NUMBER 100 OF CAPTAIN MARVEL ADVENTURES! I WANT TO THANK ALL YOU READERS FOR BEING SUCH LOYAL FANS THROUGH 100 ISSUES! AND WE PROMISE YOU MANY MORE EXCITING ADVENTURES AND THRILLS IN THE NEXT 100!
CORRECT, MY SON!
YOU GLAD IT, CAPTAIN MARVEL?
SHUT UP, YOU DIRTY RAT, YOU!
I'LL BE AROUND AGAIN, TOO! YOU CAN BE SURE OF THAT! HEH, HEH, HEHHHHH!
THOSE ARE MY SENTIMENTS TOO, FOLKS! BE SEEING YOU!

From *Whiz* #100, the story's end—alas, only 55 more issues to come!

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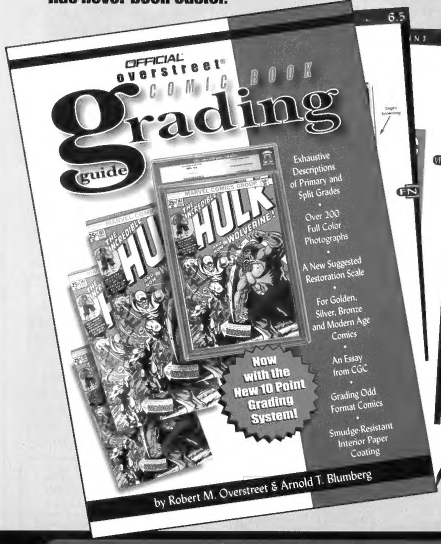

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over the next four years.

It's intriguing to note that *Captain Marvel Adventures* was the first true single-character title in any genre to reach 100 issues. The 100th issue of *The Shadow* from Street & Smith was dated two months earlier (Vol. 9 #4, Jul 1949), but even that title was more of an anthology than a single-character comic, even though it usually carried two or three Shadow stories. Likewise the 100th issue of *Blue Bolt* (Vol. 10 #1, Jul/Aug 1949) from Curtis, which also was always an anthology title.

Two years later, Captain Marvel Junior became the second character in any genre to celebrate a 100th issue, followed by *Red Ryder* #100 (Nov 1951). Oddly, however, both characters didn't truly reach their 100th issues until No. 101!

In the case of *Captain Marvel Junior*, the contents to No. 34 were bound with the cover marked No. 35, meaning there was only one issue to mark these two numbers. *Red Ryder* #1 was followed by *Hi-Spot* #2, both from an obscure publisher named Hawley in 1940, before Dell took over the *Red Ryder* #3 (Aug 1941). However, the early 1940s issue of this title were largely a newspaper reprint anthology comic.

In fact, anthologies so dominated the newsstand comic book market in its first two decades that it wasn't until *Hopalong Cassidy* #100 (Apr 1955) came along that a true single-character 100th issue appeared following the Fawcett Marvels.

As I mentioned in the previous column on 100th issues, the covers to *Superman* #100 (Oct 1955) and *Batman* #100 (Jun 1956), produced at the dawn of the Silver Age, were the first comic books ever to acknowledge DC's rich history by reprinting historic covers. Shortly after that, in *Showcase* #4 (Sep/Oct 1956), a clever reference to the Golden Age Flash in the Silver Age Flash's origin story was the first story hint involving DC's Golden Age history. I recall reading that story when it first came out—in my first year of comics collecting, at age eight—and wondering how in the world I could ever hope to find any issues of the original Flash! I spent seven years trying to find one, until finally discovering early fandom and the first few back-issue dealers.

It's fascinating to note that in the first quarter century of the history of newsstand comic books, exactly five titles reached #100 without continuing characters, whether original concepts or newspaper reprints.

The first such was Lev Gleason's historic *Crime Does Not Pay* #121 (Apr 1953), which was the 100th issue after the title began with #22 following the original 21-issue run of *Silver Streak. Crime Does Not Pay*, which paved the way for a raft of highly criticized imitators, had a few characters in its history, but nothing really long-running. Likewise *Strange Adventures*, which featured Captain Comet in #9-44, 46 and 49 through 1954 but was otherwise a science fiction story comic with no continuing characters until after it reached #100 (Jan 1959).

***CM Adventures* #100 (Sep 1949), a big centennial issue!**

The other three non-character-driven titles that reached #100 by the end of the 1950s were all from the tiny American Comics Group, which stubbornly hung on after the introduction of the Comics Code Authority. *Adventures into the Unknown* #100 (Sep 1958), the first regularly published horror comic and later a highly imaginative and amusing science fiction/fantasy title, was followed by *Confessions of the Lovelorn* #100 (Dec 1958) and *My Romantic Adventures* #100 (Apr 1959). They were the first romance comics to reach 100 issues, so they must have sold pretty well.

By 1959, the comic book industry had shrunk so drastically that ACG was the seventh-largest producer of comics—with 40 issues and four titles! The fourth title, *Forbidden Worlds*, did not reach #100 until its Nov/Dec 1961 issue.

Finally, Mighty Mouse—that ever-so-wonderful satire of Superman—endured the most convoluted flight of any licensed character. Talk about confusing 100th issues! Mighty Mouse saved the day in several different comics from Timely/Marvel, St. John, Pines, Dell and Gold Key, including one #100—*Paul Terry's Comics* (Apr 1953).

Terrytoons No. 1-59 were licensed by Timely/Marvel from 1942-47 (Mighty Mouse debuted in #38, Nov 1945) before Archer St. John took over with #60 (Sep 1947) for his new line of comics. *Terrytoons* ran through No. 86 (May 1951) before becoming *Paul Terry's Comics*, still under St. John. To make things even more confusing, #85 and #86 appeared in identical editions entitled *Terrytoons* and *Paul Terry's Comics* (thanks to Dan Stevenson for confirming that oddity!). So *Paul Terry's Comics* #100 was actually #102—in a sense!

Paul Terry's Comics ran through #125 (May 1955) before Pines (Standard) Comics bought the license

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VERONICA, YOU'RE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRL IN THE WORLD!
WHAT A LINE! HE'D SAY SO EVEN IF HE DIDN'T THINK SO!
AND SHE'D THINK SO EVEN IF HE DIDN'T SAY SO!

***Archie* #100 (Apr 1959), no celebration at all!**

and changed the title to *Adventures of Mighty Mouse* with #126 (Aug 1955). Beginning with the 129th issue (Apr 1956), dates only were listed in the indicia and continued this way for a couple of years. After Pines published #144 (Aug 1959), Pines sold *Dennis the Menace* to Fawcett and left the comic book field. Dell picked up *Adventures of Mighty Mouse* for quarterly publication and published a second #144 (Oct-Dec 1959), with the title switching to Gold Key with #156 (Oct 1962) following the split between distributor Dell and actual producer Western Lithographing, which created Dell's comics until late in 1962. "

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by Pat Calhoun

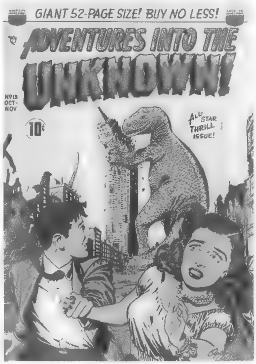
King of the Monsters

The king of the monsters was not created by a mad scientist, nor did he fly here from an alien planet. The king, Tyrannosaurus Rex, ruled millions of years ago, and in fantasy comics he still returns occasionally to terrorize the human world that rose up after the dinosaurs died. Most of these appearances assume—and who's to argue?—that if T-Rex were around today he would find people to be tasty little morsels. This, of course, only enhances his stature as the monarch of monsters. Our three books this month present a gruesome gallery of encounters between the ancient reptile ruler and the small but sentient folks of today.

Adventures Into the Unknown #13 (Oct/Nov 1950) has a dynamite dinosaur cover that unfortunately isn't backed up by a story inside. But in some ways that leaves the intense mystery of the cover—T-Rex smashing skyscrapers in a devastated city—unscathed by any attempts to work the image into a narrative that, likely as not, would diminish it. Ogden Whitney provided the art for this surpassingly provocative scene that immediately ignites the viewer's interest, achieving, in spades, the goal of any comic book cover.

What this issue does feature inside is a heady mix of vampires, Martians, witches, alternate worlds, and lost souls. Of this interior banquet the most satisfying course is "The Lost Soul"—about a scientist who tries to save his new wife from an unknown disease contracted during their honeymoon in South America. But the drug he has invented succeeds only in keeping her body alive after her soul has fled.... It's creepy, and a little schmaltzy, and, like most ACG yarns, follows a formula. But still, when the dead woman's spirit shows up at the end to escort her shattered and moribund husband into the unknown, it is a moving scene. Edvard Moritz' somber art suits the story well, especially when the zombie bride tries to "tear the soul" from the local woman serving as their maid.

"Menace From Mars" ends with a plea for world peace as the only way to prevent interplanetary invasion because Martian secret agents disguised as humans are warmongering, hoping we'll wipe ourselves out so they can take over. It's cute, but the king of the monsters mysterioso cover is what really makes this a special issue.



***Adventures Into the Unknown* #13 (Oct/Nov 1950) It's hard to imagine a plot that would credibly explain this scene; so maybe it's all for the best that's there's no T-Rex story in this issue, leaving the wonder of Ogden Whitney's cover unscathed.**

Our next entry, "The Land Unknown" (*FC* #845, Aug 1957) gives us a whole dinosaur novel, presided over by T-Rex as shown on the excellent painted cover. This is one of Dell's movie adaptations, made from a forgettable film that fared much better as a graphic novel—especially since the art was by the talented Alex Toth. Three men and a woman take off by helicopter from an Antarctic base to explore a strange warm green valley. During a storm they have a mid-air collision (with a pterodactyl, although they can't see it through the fog) and the damaged copter descends.

They are puzzled by the humid air and giant ferns as they emerge from a rough landing, but after being attacked by Tyrannosaurus Rex they realize that this valley is some inexplicable holdover from the Mesozoic era. Since the copter needs repair they have no choice but for a prolonged exploration of their new terrain. They meet up with another white man who's gone somewhat native after ten years there. The Caveman makes a play for the woman (who has been working up some strong feelings for the team commander), and also announces that he has the needed copter part from his crashed equipment. After tussles with devil plants and sea serpents, things more or less work out. Toth's visual pacing keeps things flowing.

Movie stills on the inside front cover, 32-page uninterrupted novel inside, South Pole facts and histories on the back covers—as usual, Dell's format is impeccable.

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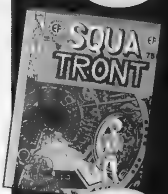

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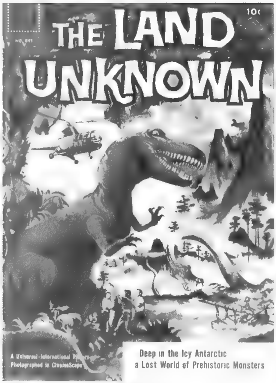


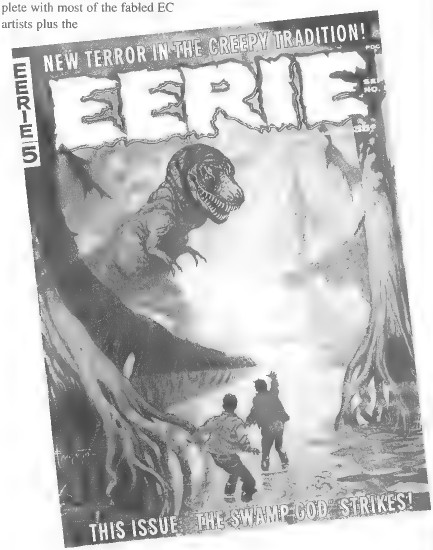
"The Land Unknown" (*FC* #845, Aug 1957) The Dell Movie comics often turned out better than the films themselves. This "Lost World" clone of a flick truly transcends itself in the art translation by Alex Toth.

To triangulate the T-Rex theme: the king of the monsters rendered by the king of fantasy artists, Frank Frazetta. *Eerie* #5 (Sep 1966) shows Frank and publisher Jim Warren at the top of their games. After an inside front cover, "The Mummy" (#4 in "Eerie's Monster Gallery") with art by Wallace Wood and Dan Adkins, comes a spate of stories—all but one scripted by the amazing Archie Goodwin. But listen to this killer art line-up: Reed Crandall (who shines in black and white), Al Williamson (ditto), Steve Ditko (superb!), Eugene Colan (page three is a full-page panel, and Warren books were big), Rocco Mastroserio (with script by old pro Carl Wessler), Angelo Torres ("The Swamp God") and Joe Orlando (with an elaborate Cousin Eerie, the host, in a nicely framed splash panel).

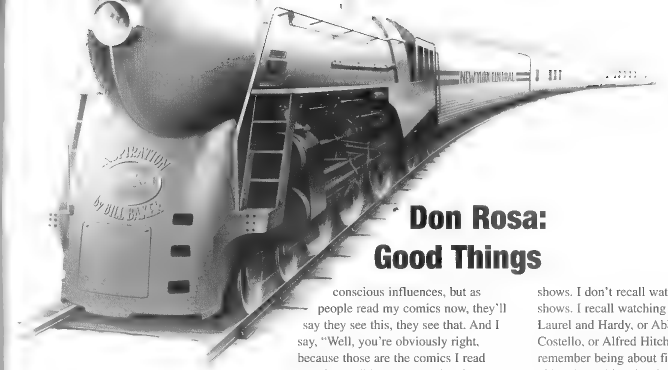
This is a thoroughly enjoyable comic with fantasy/horror stories that had more bite than their 12-cent counterparts that had to answer to the Comics Code. Top honors go to the Ditko-illustrated "Black Magic," an ironic gem of wizardry gone awry. And second place is snared by "The Mummy Strikes," a smooth "mummy transforms into werewolf" weirdie beautifully "illuminated" by Crandall's exquisite linework.

In a brilliant move that was in itself Lovecraftian, Warren revived the revered pre-Code horror style of storytelling complete with most of the fabled EC artists plus the noteworthy addition of Steve Ditko (who drew pre-Code horror for Charlton) and other stars. And that fabulous Frazetta painting is the perfect "last word" in our tribute to Tyrannosaurus Rex, the king of the monsters.

P.S. For this *CBM* #100 celebration "Weird Words" has collected a stellar assortment of Silver Age T-Rex covers in this month's color section. (Thank you Will Murray, supplier of silver saurians!)



***Eerie* #5 (Sep 1966) The brute strength of the dinosaur king is perfectly captured in this terrific Frank Frazetta painting. And in the story Angelo Torres' T-Rex is also a towering terror, "The Swamp God."**



Don Rosa: Good Things

In an industry known for its fan-friendly creators, Don Rosa stands out as someone who goes above and well beyond what even the most demanding collector would expect. Of course, having risen through the ranks from being a dedicated reader and collector of comics, he has become one of the most widely recognized and revered comic book artists to ever have been associated with Walt Disney's characters. His tales weren't just funny and exciting and well drawn and paced beautifully, they were also well researched, and true to both the characters and their shared continuity.

Sadly, we've been unable to enjoy any of his more recent work here in the States for a few years. However, it does look like there's a good chance that Mr. Rosa's well written and illustrated tales of adventure featuring Uncle Walt's ducks will be gracing newsstands here in the good old US of A very soon.

It seems that good things do come to those who wait.

Comic Book Marketplace: You were a fan long before you started working on the various Duck books for Disney, right?

Don Rosa: Oh, yes.

CBM: Well, who were some of your inspirations back then?

Rosa: Well, none of them were conscious influences, but as people read my comics now, they'll say they see this, they see that. And I say, "Well, you're obviously right, because those are the comics I read growing up." I never consciously imitated them, but, of course, if it's what I thought was funny or exciting, that's what I would put into my own story.

Of course, Carl Barks. I like his comedy adventures and his characterization, so you'll see that influence. But the second biggest influence would be Will Elder, because I grew up reading my sister's comics, and she had Barks' Ducks, and she had *Mad* comics and *Mad* magazine. So all of the weird humor and the background details, that all comes from the old *Mad* comics—which I was too young to read at the time. The same as with Carl Barks' adventure stories. Since I was born in 1951, I wouldn't have started buying these comics myself until maybe the early '60s, when all the best years of his stuff would have been over with. But my sister bought all of the comic books, starting years before I was even born, and she never got rid of them.

So I grew up with every Dell comic and *Mad* comic from about 1949 on, thinking these were just current comics. When I wanted comics I didn't go to the store; I just went to my sister's closet and got another big stack of comics. So I'm influenced by that, the work of Carl Barks and Will Elder.

But then the other thing I liked to do when I was a kid, besides reading comics, was watching movies on television. I don't recall watching kiddie shows. I don't recall watching cartoon shows. I recall watching old movies. Laurel and Hardy, or Abbott and Costello, or Alfred Hitchcock. I can still remember being about five or six years old and watching Frank Capra's *Lost Horizon*. I still remember just where I was sitting. So it was the Golden Age of Hollywood, Hitchcock movies and so on, you might see all that somewhere in my stories.

But the stories are a product of everything I grew up on—TV, and comics, and movies, and so forth.

Oh, and you'll certainly see Mort Weisinger stuff in my stories. Because I like to do origin stories, and "what if?" stories, and untold tales and stuff like that. That all comes from the Superman comics I started reading in the early '60s.

CBM: Were there any novelists or children's authors outside of comics who might have also contributed to your repertoire?

Rosa: No. My parents were not people who read. My sister didn't read books. I grew up in a house devoid of books—it had lots of comic books, though. So I was never exposed to books. I made up for that later, because I've got two or three rooms full of books now. I just like to have books even if I have already read them, or will maybe never have time to read them. I just accumulate books like a librarian. I just love being surrounded by books, maybe because I missed out on them as a kid.

[continued on page 80]

FUNNIES FARRAGO by R.C. Harvey
Little Orphan Annie
IN HIS COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO "A MAN IS SENGO ALIVE INTO A BURIAL SHROUD AND THROWN INTO THE SEA!

Slaphappy Heroicism, A Good Last Act

In retrospect (which is our habitual mode here), it seems a perfect scheme. Invent a comic book hero, publish the comic book, and then sell the feature in comic strip form to a newspaper syndicate and wait for the money to roll in. It worked with Superman. Why not, they may have reasoned, with his diametric opposite, Funnyman?

It should come as no surprise, then, that Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster went looking for Vincent Sullivan at Magazine Enterprises when, in 1947, they started to peddle their latest concoction: Sullivan, remember, had been the editor of *Action Comics*, the first issue of which had featured the debut of Superman in 1938. Why shouldn't lightning strike twice? Particularly if all the ingredients of the original formula for success were incanted.

"They came to me," Sullivan said, "and they had this idea. They were constantly coming up with new ideas. And I guess they didn't show it to Donenfeld. I'm sure they didn't."

Certainly not. Harry Donenfeld was the honcho at National Comics Publications, as DC Comics was called then, and Siegel and Shuster had just emerged from a court battle over rights to Superman. They lost that battle: Donenfeld owned Superman because, in the publishing custom of the day, Siegel and Shuster had signed away their rights to the character on the eve of his inaugural publication. But the court had awarded the duo $100,000 for Superboy, who had, in a reversal of the usual order of things, come along later.

Under the circumstances, Siegel and Shuster were not likely to show Funnyman to Donenfeld. Quite apart from whatever inhibitions the ownership dispute may have fomented, they were about to be fired at DC. To assuage the pair's earlier unhappiness about being exploited as Superman was turning into a nearly overnight comic book success, Donenfeld had agreed to give them a share (reportedly 50 percent) of the net income from the newspaper syndication of *Superman* plus five percent of the

Meet the author and artist of FUNNYM

JOE Shuster and Jerry Siegel, both born in 1914, Shuster in Canada and Siegel in Cleveland, began collaborating on comics the very first day they met. That was in Glenville High School in Cleveland, Ohio. Some years were to elapse before the team made its first sale, But they were a pretty optimistic and enterprising pair. They worked together on the school paper, where Shuster was art editor and Siegel a feature writer. An extracurricular activity at the time was a magazine "Science Fiction" which the two sold through the mails.

Later Mr. Siegel assisted in writing a mail order course entitled, "How To Be Funny," issued a publication called Dental Review and attempted to establish a radio script syndicate as well as an advertising comics studio. He succeeded in forming the American Artists League, a sales agency for gag cartoonists.

Shuster and Siegel clicked in an astounding way with "Superman" which played a major part in launching the current comic book craze. Superman comic books sold in the millions, the feature was widely syndicated and the byproduct field well tapped. But there were legal wrinkles. The two originators sued Superman's publisher in March of 1947 and parted company with him when the lawsuit was settled out of court a year later.

While Mr. Siegel was in the army he thought of creating a new comic strip not solely along adventure lines, a vogue which he considered waning, but adventure combined with that good old ingredient, comedy. Convinced that the public's taste operates in cycles, he decided to reach back and try to recapture the slapstick of the Keystone Komedies, the thrills of the Harold Lloyd films and the hairbreadth athletics of swashbuckling Douglas Fairbanks and merge them all into one comic strip.

The hero, Siegel decided, must be new and different, must use his humor as a weapon for fighting crime. To this end, Larry Davis, comedian extraordinary was created, given a clownish costume to wear and sundry hidden gadgets to baffle the enemies of law and order. Under the name of Funnyman, Mr. Davis dons a putty nose, reverses his civilian garments and becomes a comic crimebuster. His crime fighting preps include the Jet-Jalopy, Funny Manor, the Trix-Cycle and the Funny-Gun.

Shuster and Siegel have haunted old-time movie houses to gain atmosphere for their strip, and have

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licensing revenues, provided they agreed to work exclusively on Donenfeld's comics for the next ten years at $35 a page. The contracted-for decade was about to expire, and we must assume that Siegel and Shuster knew they would soon be unemployed.

Having made their living (a good living, even, at times, a fabulous one) in comics for the past ten years, it was natural that they would plan to continue that career, albeit with another publisher. But to do so, they needed another character. Funnyman was the outcome, and Funnyman seems to me as inspired an invention as Superman was.

By this time, the comic book industry, a notoriously copycat business, was awash in costumed super-heroes, all descendants, in one way or another, of Superman. Another entry into the long john legions would scarcely cause a ripple on the surface of the superpond. Siegel and Shuster surely knew if they were going to regain a place in the funnybook field, they needed something out-of-the-ordinary. And Funnyman was that.

...
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one, but does most of his work
d on the kitchen table.

Jerry Siegel

Like Superman and all his ilk, Funnyman has a secret identity. But there, the similarities end. Larry Davis, a professional comedian, had no particular ambition to be a crime-fighter until his manager, the comely June Farrell (whom Davis, in a flash of waggish inspiration, calls "Brain"), proposes a publicity stunt.

She's arranged for a phony jewelry store heist at her uncle's store, she gives Davis a clown costume—baggy polka-dotted pants, floppy shoes, and bulbous putty nose—and tells him to wear it and call himself "Funnyman" while apprehending the faux robber. Davis, hoping the publicity will restore his sagging comedy career, goes along with the gag. But then, as the caption intones, "Fate tossed a monkey wrench into June's carefully laid plans."

June comes into the store just as Davis, in his "Funnyman" outfit, tackles the robber with a squirt gun, and she realizes at once that the robber is not the fellow she hired for the gig.

"There's been an awful mistake," she yells to Davis. "You're battling a real crook!"

"Yeah?" says Davis, giggling, "That makes the situation all the funnier."

Later, once the real robber has been taken into custody, Davis tells June that he likes the idea of fighting crime by throwing custard pies and wise-cracks at the "wrong guys." Resolving forthwith to continue the career of Funnyman, Davis devises a suit of everyday raiment that can be converted quickly into Funnyman's clown getup by turning it inside out. To complete his transformation into the "Battling Buffoon," he sticks the putty nose on his schnozz and—presto!—he's Funnyman.

"Our aim was to get away from the hackneyed blood-and-thunder type of athlete," Shuster told an interviewer from *The New Yorker* a year later when the newspaper strip was just being launched (December 25, 1948). "Funnyman combines high adventure and slapstick—in a word, action, thrills *and* comedy."

Larry Davis, he continued, is a composite of "all the great comedians, past and present—Milton Berle, Red Skelton, Bob Hope, Harold Lloyd, and Morey Amsterdam—and we've got some funny nicknames for him—the Daffy Daredevil, the Comic Crimebuster, the Slapstick Slugger and even better ones."

Siegel and Shuster took their new creation to Sullivan, who had an office on Park Place near City Hall in New York. Sullivan may not have seen either of Superman's creators since about 1940, when he'd departed DC to help launch another publishing company, Columbia Comic Corporation, which he subsequently left in 1943 to start his own company, Magazine Enterprises. When they walked into Sullivan's office, they were no longer geeky teenagers as they had been when inventing Superman while attending high school in Cleveland.

Whether Vince Sullivan thought Funnyman was the next four-color phenomenon or not, we don't know. He probably did not exclaim, as he reportedly did when first seeing Superman, "This is what the kids want!" In later years, Sullivan admitted that he hadn't anticipated at all the success of

Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel as pictured in the Bell Syndicate's promotional material for the *Funnyman* comic strip.

Superman. He bought it, he said, because "it looked good. It was different and there was a lot of action."

He may not have said that about Funnyman, but it was as true of the Slapstick Sleuth as it was of the Man of Steel.

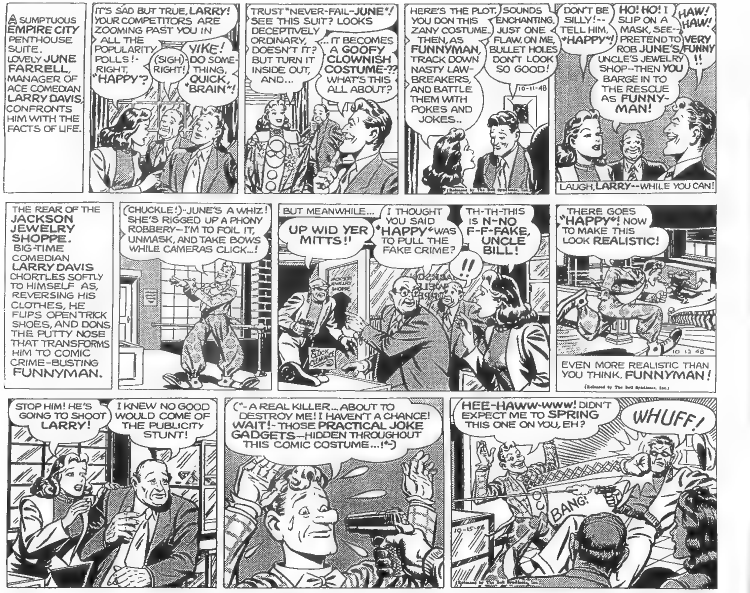
The first issue of *Funnyman*, cover-dated January 1948, probably hit the stands in early December 1947. The Courageous Clown's origin is deftly told in a one-page introduction, and then he tackles "The Teenage Terrors" in a 19-page epic.

The teenagers are a Fagan-style gang of youths who pick the pockets of celebrities and turn the loot over to their adult manager, "Ants" Plants. They steal Davis' wristwatch, but he realizes immediately that it's missing and trails the kids to a warehouse on the waterfront where he sees them confabulating with Ants. Changing to his Funnyman garb, Davis enters the crooks' lair but is apprehended, then escapes and pursues Ants until he captures him and turns him in to the nearest police station.

Back home, June tells him that after she'd read about the rash of teenage pick pocketing, she substituted a cheap imitation for his heirloom watch.

"You mean I courted violent death for nothing?" Davis says. "Ho! Ho! Ha! Ha! That's the funniest thing that ever happened to me!"

I dunno. Maybe you had to be there, but I don't find that as hilarious as Larry Davis does. Still, it gives the proceedings a suitably light-hearted ending,


A SUMPTUOUS EMPIRE CITY PENTHOUSE SUITE, LOVELY JUNE FARRELL, MANAGER OF ACE COMEDIAN LARRY DAVIS, CONFRONTS HIM WITH THE FACTS OF LIFE.
IT'S SAD BUT TRUE, LARRY! YOUR COMPETITORS ARE ZOOMING PAST YOU IN ALL THE POPULARITY POLLS!- RIGHT, "HAPPY"?
(SIGH) DO SOMETHING, QUICK, "BRAIN"!
YIKE!
TRUST "NEVER-FAIL-JUNE"! SEE THIS SUIT? LOOKS DECEPTIVELY ORDINARY, DOESN'T IT? BUT TURN IT INSIDE OUT, AND...
...IT BECOMES A GOOFY CLOWNISH COSTUME-?? WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?
HERE'S THE PLOT: YOU DON THIS ZANY COSTUME, THEN, AS FUNNYMAN, TRACK DOWN NASTY LAW-BREAKERS, AND BATTLE THEM WITH POKES AND JOKES..
SOUNDS ENCHANTING. JUST ONE FLAW ON ME, BULLET HOLES. DON'T LOOK SO GOOD!
10-11-48
I DON'T BE SILLY!-- TELL HIM, "HAPPY"!
HO! HO! I SLIP ON A MASK, SEE- PRETEND TO BE ROB JUNE'S UNCLE'S JEWELRY SHOP--THEN YOU BARGE IN TO THE RESCUE AS FUNNY-MAN!
HAW! HAW! VERY FUNNY !!
LAUGH, LARRY--WHILE YOU CAN!
THE REAR OF THE JACKSON JEWELRY SHOPPE. BIG-TIME COMEDIAN LARRY DAVIS CHORTLES SOFTLY TO HIMSELF AS, REVERSING HIS CLOTHES, HE FLIPS OPEN TRICK SHOES, AND DONS THE PUTTY NOSE THAT TRANSFORMS HIM TO COMIC CRIME-BUSTING FUNNYMAN.
(CHUCKLE!)- JUNE'S A WHIZ! SHE'S RIGGED UP A PHONY ROBBERY--I'M TO FOIL IT, UNMASK, AND TAKE BOWS WHILE CAMERAS CLICK...!
BUT MEANWHILE...
UP WID YER MITTS!!
I THOUGHT YOU SAID "HAPPY" WAS TO PULL THE FAKE CRIME?
TH-TH-THIS IS N-NO F-F-FAKE, UNCLE BILL!
THERE GOES "HAPPY"! NOW TO MAKE THIS LOOK REALISTIC!
EVEN MORE REALISTIC THAN YOU THINK, FUNNYMAN!
(Tribune by The Jest Syndicate, Inc.)
STOP HIM! HE'S GOING TO SHOOT LARRY!
I KNEW NO GOOD WOULD COME OF THE PUBLICITY STUNT!
"--A REAL KILLER...ABOUT TO DESTROY ME! I HAVEN'T A CHANCE! WAIT!- THOSE PRACTICAL JOKE GADGETS--HIDDEN THROUGHOUT THIS COMIC COSTUME...!"
HEE-HAWW-WW! DIDN'T EXPECT ME TO SPRING THIS ONE ON YOU, EH?
WHUFF!
BANG!

(these two pages) In dailies from the first weeks of the run, June Farrell's plan for a fake robbery at her uncle's jewelry store goes awry, but Larry Davis, as the costumed crime-fighter Funnyman, emerges triumphant anyhow and, unbeknownst to the puzzled June, decides to take up a career of comedic crime-fighting.

AS THE SPRAWLED THUG GRASPS TOWARD HIS FALLEN WEAPON, THE FIGHTING FOOL WHIPS THE FUNNYGUN OUT OF ONE OF THE MANY CIRCLES ON HIS TROUSERS WHICH ARE IN REALITY POCKETS.
TRICKY, HAH?- I'LL GET EVEN!
NO YOU DON'T! DROP THAT GUN!
COVERED!
SO--YOU WERE GOING TO MURDER ME IN COLD BLOOD, EH? I'LL GET EVEN BY LETTING YOU HAVE IT!
PLEASE DON'T KILL ME! I'LL REFORM!
10-16-48
A WATER PISTOL!
YAK! YAK! DECEPTIVE, WOT?
GOSH, LARRY! WHEN I ROPED YOU IN FOR THIS STUNT, I NEVER DREAMED THAT...
EXCUSE IT! PLEASE. I'VE SOME UNFINISHED BUSINESS TO ATTEND TO.
-THAT PAIL-- FILLED WITH SOAPY WATER!-)
I'LL TEAR YA APART WID ME TWO HANDS!
KETCH ME IF YA CAN!
FUNNY HOW A LITTLE SOAP AND WATER AFFECTS SOME PEOPLE!
JUST A MINUTE, YOU!
10-18-48
BONK
HOLD IT, YOU! YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!
MUST BE MY ARRESTING PERSONALITY
YOU'RE MAKING A MISTAKE, SERGEANT! HE PERSONALLY CAPTURED...
OLICE
...THIS JEWELRY STORE ROBBER!
IT'S "ICE" McGURK!
THEN WHO IN BLAZES ARE YOU?
10-19 48
HE'S LAR-
OW!
THE NAME IS FUNNYMAN, OFFICER. AND WHAT'S YOUR MONIKER?
I'M DETECTIVE SERGEANT HARRIGAN AND- SAY! WAIT A MINUTE! I'M ASKING THE QUESTIONS!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY MEDDLING IN THE LAW'S BUSINESS? AND WHY DO YOU WEAR THAT SCREWY GET-UP?
I DRESS AS I PLEASE, AND IT BEHOOVES ME TO BARGE IN UNINVITED, AND AID THE COURSE OF JUSTICE WHENEVER MY PECULIAR TALENTS CAN BE OF ASSISTANCE.
CUT THE MALARKY! WHO ARE YOU?
NIX TO THAT! THE SECRET TO MY SANER IDENTITY IS STRICTLY MY AFFAIR!
TELEVATOR
COME BACK- OR I SHOOT!
GOING... GOING...
TO THE STORE BASEMENT! A PROMOTION'S IN IT FOR WHOEVER CATCHES THAT MAN!
I DON'T GET IT! LARRY FACED THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MOMENT TO UNMASK... AND FUMBLED IT!
GONE!
10-23-48

an entirely appropriate grace note for Funnyman's first outing.

Two other stories fill up the issue. In one, an 8-pager, Funnyman pursues a mechanical toy kangaroo in which June has hidden her diamond ring to prevent a thief from taking it; in the other, a three-page interlude, we meet Comicman and Laffman, "cheap imitations," as Funnyman says, taking an unmistakably satirical swipe at the propensity of the comic book industry to ape every new idea slavishly.

The most unusual aspect of these stories is the number of panels given over to depicting activity in careful sequence. When Funnyman enters Ants' warehouse headquarters, his movements

of leaping, bounding, diving and rolling under the table around which the hoodlums are gathered, inspecting his watch, takes five panels as I've numbered them. Six more panels are used to depict Funnyman's attempt to retrieve his watch.

Ants Plants notices that the watch is missing and shouts, "There's a crook in this room!"

It's the book's funniest line. But no one laughs.

For the next five panels, Funnyman successfully dodges his foes, but he's finally captured and tied up.

All this action takes five pages, many more than are necessary for merely advancing the story, more than most other comic books of the time would have devoted to such a sequence. Every maneuver is depicted, step-by-step, almost in the fashion of the key drawings of an animation storyboard. The kinship to animated cartoons is scarcely accidental. Throughout the Funnyman oeuvre, a manic sense of movement is on display, most of it intended to provoke laughter in the same manner as animated cartoons do.

The Slaphappy Slugger dashes around a lot and accompanies every action with a wise crack or a snappy remark, pictures and words yoked for yuks. As a result, the Funnyman books resonate with a frenzied, madcap action, which the Fighting Fool punctuates regularly by yodeling another chorus of his battle song:

"I'm the world's toughest hero,

YIPE! I'M SEEING THINGS!
AM I THAT FRIGHTENING?
NOW TO SKIDOO!
WHERE'D HE GO?
THE FUNNY-FACED FELLA? OUT THAT WINDOW!
SWIFTLY, LARRY SLIPS OFF THE PUTTY NOSE, REVERSES HIS COSTUME...THEN STROLLS CASUALLY OUT TO THE STREET.
SEEMS LIKE SOME EXCITEMENT GOING ON!
10-31-48
YOU CERTAINLY ARE IN A HURRY, MA'M.
AND IN A DITHER, TOO!
FASTER!
HA! SO HERE YOU ARE!
HA YOURSELF!
THE NEWSPAPERS ARE JAM-PACKED WITH ACCOUNTS OF FUNNYMAN'S EXPLOITS, AND YOU SHOOT SPITBALLS!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH SPIT-BALLS?
10-22-48
COMIC CRIME FIGHTER CAPTURES CROOK!!
THROUGH A MIRACLE YOU CAPTURED A REAL THIEF. WHY, WHEN SGT. HARRIGAN ASKED FOR YOUR IDENTITY, DIDN'T YOU REVEAL IT?
BECAUSE I DON'T INTEND TO ...EVER!
WASSAT ??
MY EARS MUST BE DECEIVING ME!
THE IDENTITY OF FUNNYMAN WILL REMAIN A SECRET BETWEEN THE THREE OF US!
BUT AFTER I CREATED SUCH A BEAUTIFUL PUBLICITY GAG... WHY DO THIS TO ME??
BECAUSE FUNNYMAN IS GOING CONTINUE TO BATTLE AGAINST GANGLAND!
10-13-48
YOU DIDN'T COUNT ON THE FACT, JUNE, THAT MY GREAT SUPPRESSED DESIRE HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO BE A CRIME-FIGHTER. YOU SHOWED ME HOW TO BE ONE... A COMICALLY DISTINCTIVE ONE, AT THAT-- AND I DON'T INTEND GIVING IT UP!
SO RECONCILE YOURSELVES TO IT, KIDS. FROM NOW ON LARRY DAVIS' HOBBY IS BATTLING WRONGDOERS WITH JOKES, GAGS, AND JABS--- AS FUNNYMAN!
I KNEW NO GOOD WOULD COME OF IT!
OUCH!

(these two pages) In more early dailies, John Sikela demonstrates his skill at limning the curvaceous gender, and Jerry Siegel insinuates a little romance into the saga—as well as the "oh, no—not again" motif that will characterize June's reaction to her client's future commitment to the comic capers of Funnyman. Siegel also injects flashes of wit like Davis' acknowledging June's PR cunning by calling her "Brain."

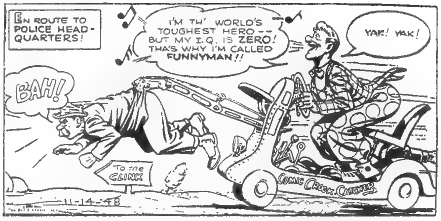
LARRY! HOW NICE OF YOU TO CALL!-- WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND, "LAUGHING BOY"?
WELL, YOU SEE, IT'S LIKE THIS, "BRAIN"--
...A MIRACLE HAS HAPPENED! I'M NOT WORKIN' T' NIGHT--BUT ACTUALLY! AN' SO I SEZ T' MESELF, HOW'S ABOUT YOU AN' TH' MASTERMIND STEPPIN' OUT THIS EVE, HEY?
WHY, LARRY, YOU DARLING! OF COURSE I'D LOVE TO HAVE A DATE WITH YOU! DOES A DUCK LIKE WATER? DO BIRDS LIKE TO FLY? BUT OF COURSE!!
HM-MM. VERY PECULIAR! I'M THE ONE WHO USUALLY HAS TO ENTICE HIM TO GO STEPPING... I WONDER IF...?!
SILLY GIRL! DON'T BE SO SUSPICIOUS! BE HAPPY...GAY! YOU'RE GOING TO ENJOY AN EVENING OF FUN WITH THE WITTIEST BLOKE IN TOWN!
EVENING.
UM-MM! NOT BAD, JUNE! YOUR BEST EVENING GOWN-- FOR YOUR BEST BEAU!
HM-MM.--IF THIS PERFUME IS AS HEXY AS THE SALES GAL CLAIMED, LIL OL' LARRY DAVIS'LL FIND HIMSELF ALTAR BOUND BEFORE THE EVENING IS OVER!
("--IT'S HIM! MY DREAM BOY!--) COME IN, LARRY!
KNOCK! KNOCK!
FUNNYMAN!!!
YOU--YOU MENACE TO SANITY! WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY ASKING ME FOR A DATE, THEN SHOWING UP IN THAT MONSTROUS GET-UP??
I FORGOT TO SAY THAT MY DATE WITH YOU WOULD BE IN THE IDENTITY OF FUNNY-MAN.
YOU SEE, JUNE, YOU'VE WORKED UP SUCH A MAGNIFICENT HATE FOR FUNNYMAN EVEN IF HE WAS CREATED AT YOUR OWN SUGGESTION--THAT I'D LIKE TO PROVE TO YOU HE'S NOT SUCH A BAD FELLA, AFTER ALL.
BUT MY EVENING DRESS--MY EXPECTATION OF A JOYOUS EVENING WITH A NORMAL SHMOE! YOU CAN'T DO THIS TO ME!
WE'LL COMPROMISE! FIRST I'LL PROVE TO YOU THAT FUNNYMAN IS WORTHY OF YOUR RESPECT--THEN I'LL SQUIRE YOU AS LARRY DAVIS, OKE??
ALL RIGHT, YOU HEEL! WELL...OPEN THE DOOR!
THE DOOR? DEAR ME, NO! EXIT THROUGH TH' WINDOW, MY SWEET!
HE'S BATS!!
YOU GOT ROCKS IN TH' HEAD, OR SOMETHIN'? SINCE WHEN DO PEOPLE LEAVE ROOMS THROUGH A WINDOW--ESPECIALLY WHEN THE WINDOW IS TEN STORIES ABOVE STREET (A/C LEVEL?
AS OF RIGHT NOW!-- TEE HEE!!
IN ANSWER TO THE COMIC CRIMEBUSTER'S WHISTLED SUMMONS, A WEIRD VEHICLE SPEEDS, THEN HALTS, OUTSIDE JUNE FARRELL'S WINDOW!
MEET M' JET JALOPY, JUNE! IT'S BUILT IT N' SELF--'N IS WORKS WITH PHOTO-ELECTRIC CELLS...I WHISTLE...N' IT COMES A'RUNNIN'!
SOMETHING TELLS ME THIS IS ONE DATE I'LL NEVER FORGET!

But my IQ is zero—

That's why I'm called Funnyman!"

Unhappily, very little of any of it is as funny as Funnyman thinks it is. The step-by-step setups too often lead to gags that are too tepid to justify the space expended to get to the punch lines. The sight gags are broad rather than clever. The chatty captions are perhaps the best comedy in the books, but the plots they embroider are thoroughly pedestrian. Siegel was, I suspect, straining for laughs, and the strain shows.

Still, the comedy was at least as amusing as most of the funny animal and teenage comics then flooding the newsstands. And the eponymous hero of the books was perfectly conceived, it


EN ROUTE TO POLICE HEAD-QUARTERS!
I'M TH' WORLD'S TOUGHEST HERO — BUT MY I.Q. IS ZERO! THAT'S WHY I'M CALLED FUNNYMAN!!
YAK! YAK!
BAM!
TO THE GARK!
COMIC CROOK CATCHER

When apprehending Piccadilly Pete from England in the first Sunday sequence of the strip, Funnyman demonstrates the use of the Comic Crook Catcher, just one of his array of hilarious gadgets.

seems to me. His appearance had the traditional putty-nose appeal of the circus clown, an irresistible attraction for youthful readers, among whom, at the time, I was numbered. And as a neophyte cartoonist, I thought the idea of a crime-fighter having a bulbous nose was sheerly brilliant; it would be fun to draw such a character, I thought. (And, as we'll see, I was not alone in this bemused conviction.)

The Funnyman artists were told to think of Danny Kaye when rendering the character, and Funnyman's carrot-colored hair and easy-going, flip manner deftly evoked the popular song-and-dance comedian.

The key to Funnyman's appeal, Shuster believed, was gadgetry. He is vulnerable, like any ordinary mortal, but he makes up for this shortcoming with ingenious devices.

"He's got no super-powers," Shuster said. "The gimmick is he's an inventor and outwits his foes with goofy gadgets. He's got springs in his shoes. He's got a jalopy with a putty nose, and he can make it go forward or backward or stand up on its hind wheels by whistling to it in different keys."

"We want a strip that will be read by the entire family," Shuster continued, talking now about the newspaper enterprise, not the comic book, although the remark doubtless applies to both. "The jet jalopy is very popular with kids, and with adults who like to relive their childhood. That was always one of my fantasies as a child—to take off into the stratosphere in a beat-up car. Then there's the Comic Crook Catcher and the Trix-cycle—jet, of course, like the jalopy. Our main interest, though, is in keeping Funnyman clean-cut but vulnerable."

The Comic Crook Catcher is a sort of scooter with a grappling arm, and the Trix-cycle is a motorcycle with Funnyman's face on the front. One of his best weapons, however, is the Funnygun that sprays laughing gas or squirts water or any of an assortment of hilarious missiles. The gun doesn't appear until *Funnyman* #4 although it seems, upon reflection, so natural an accouterment to the Crusading Clown's armament that it should have surfaced much earlier.

The Jet Jalopy is introduced in the second issue of the comic book. The whistling dodge had not yet been conceived, so the auto responds to its owner's verbal commands, a notion simply too outlandish even for Funnyman. "Stand up, Jet," he says, and the car rears up on its rear wheels. He tells it to go and stop and roll over. It

A Sunday strip displaying the sort of highly physical activity that distinguishes Funnyman in both newspaper and comic book versions.

IT WAS NICE OF YOUR AUNT LUCY TO SUGGEST I INVITE YOU OVER, REGGIE. SHE'S SUCH A DEAR!
I THINK SHE AND BOWSER HAVE A LOT IN COMMON.
MISS HALL--OR DARE I CALL YOU SALLY?...IT MAY SEEM RASHLY IMPETUOUS OF ME, BUT I...I...
(HOW CAN I DISCREETLY LET HER IMMEDIATELY KNOW THAT I LOVE HER?)
COME HERE, BOWSER!
I WANT YOU TWO TO BE FRIENDS! PAT HIM ON THE HEAD, REGGIE! SHOW BOWSER YOU LIKE HIM.
CAN'T I JUST SAY SOMETHING NICE TO HIM?

By the late summer of 1949, Larry Davis and Funnyman had disappeared from the Sunday strip, leaving the stage (still entitled Funnyman) to Reggie van Twerp, who appears here in a fragment of the August 14 strip.

responds like a trained dog.

We might be tempted to see the Jet Jalopy as a satiric comment on, say, the Batmobile or any of the other contraptions by which the spandex-clad augmented their crime-fighting skills. But satire requires a pay-off that ridicules its target in unmistakable terms. The three-page encounter Funnyman has with Comicman and Laffman, for example, ends with our Dapper Dingbat booting both his rivals in the rear, the most pedestrian (if you'll pardon me) of satiric endings (ooops, sorry, again) but an unmistakable denigration of the satiric target.

For satiric effect in the Jalopy's case, perhaps the car would turn out to be smarter than its driver, or maybe it would fail to function as an ordinary car. Moreover, the satire would best achieve its impact by means of a single appearance. The Jalopy, however, becomes a regular member of the Funnyman cast, and the Goofy Gumshoe employs it as it is designed, no more, no less. No satire.

Some observers at the time supposed Funnyman to be a parody of Superman, an artifice of ridicule by which Siegel and Shuster attempted to strike back at the publisher who had stolen their earlier creation. Shuster admitted this interpretation might, on occasion, be possible, but he insisted that parody wasn't intended.

SO THAT'S THE GRATITUDE YOU OFFER ME FOR MY ZEAL IN PROTECTING FROM SCHEMERS THE MILLIONS DEAR UNCLE OSCAR LEFT YOU! THAT SETTLES IT! I WASH MY HANDS OF YOU COMPLETELY!
AUNT LUCY! YOU DON'T REALLY MEAN IT? GOSH, THAT'S SHE -- I MEAN GOSH, THAT MAKES ME FEEL TERRIBLE!

Reggie van Twerp was reincarnated from a strip by that name that Siegel and Shuster concocted in the early 1930s before their comic book career was safely in gear. Herewith, a sampling of the earlier version.

And the syndicate promotional material that accompanied the introduction of the *Funnyman* newspaper strip offered quite another explanation of the character's origins:

"While Siegel was in the Army [in 1945], he thought of creating a new comic strip not solely along adventure lines, a vogue which he considered waning, but adventure combined with the good old ingredient, comedy. Convinced that the public's taste operates in cycles, he decided to reach back and try to recapture the slapstick of the Keystone Komedies, the thrills of the Harold Lloyd films, and the hairbreadth athletics of swashbuckling Douglas Fairbanks and merge them all into one comic strip. The hero, Siegel decided, must be new and different, must use his humor as a weapon for fighting crime."

While Funnyman jokes and giggles as he grapples with the bad guys, the comedy itself seldom works as a weapon. In *Funnyman* #3, however, the Dynamic Dope's antics directly affect the outcome. The earth is threatened with invasion by superior beings from outer space. One of them takes Funnyman back to his home planet as a specimen, and the Mirthful Menace assaults his inquisitors with a joy buzzer, an exploding cigar, and a squirting lapel flower. The aliens, thinking him utterly mad, decide not to invade earth after all because they don't want to become as insane as he is.

The comic book, coming out every other month, lasted only six issues, the last cover-dated August. By then, Siegel and Shuster were already at work on the newspaper strip incarnation of their Battling Buffoon.

In May 1948, Shuster was writing John Sikela, one of his Cleveland studio crew who was still in his Ohio hometown. The letter reveals a good deal about the working methods Shuster had evolved through the Superman years as demand for material increased. After

Dick Ayers drew this picture as a try-out for the Jimmy Durante comic book ME was considering. Durante is saying, "Ev'rybody wants t' get inta the act." Ayers got the job.

asking if Sikela had "received the pencil roughs of the dailies." Shuster goes on: "I thought they might help with the initial layouts.... You can use your own judgment as to following my sketches—if you can visualize any scene differently, that's okay too....We've been getting wonderful reactions on the strip thus far and expect it to receive a deluge of publicity."

According to Harry Miller, Sikela drew most of the comic book and much of the comic strip. And Miller should know. Several years ago, he assembled virtually all of the comic strip run, hoping to interest a publisher in a reprint volume (an excellent idea, forsooth), and in preparing an introduction for the book, Miller interviewed the artists and several other comic book savants. Without Harry's selfless collaboration, this installment of "Funnies Farrago" would be considerably poorer: with the passionate generosity only such Funnyman fans as we can muster, he supplied me with copies of some of the newspaper strip run and the foregoing quotation from Shuster's letter to Sikela.

Miller agrees that at least two and perhaps three other hands are evident in the comic book artwork although who.

Marvin Stein's Funnyman on the cover of the first issue.

Another Stein cover.

exactly, did which stories still seems to me a little uncertain, the verdict sometimes depending upon rusty memories. Marvin Stein, another regular Shuster cohort, is one of the other artists. Influenced, Miller told me, by Albert Dorne, an illustrator with a comedic bent, Stein seems a particularly appropriate illuminator of Funnyman's escapades. "The Medieval Mirthquake" story in #4 is stylistically much more elaborate than most of the other *Funnyman* material—more feathering and shading and detailing—as well as being more humorously nuanced visually; and it, Miller says, is certainly Stein's work, as are most of the book covers. Stein, in turn, had pencil assists from Dick Ayers, doing his first comic book work, and Ernie Bache.

Ayers and Bache met in the fall of 1947 while taking a class at the newly-formed Cartoonists and Illustrators School started by *Tarzan*'s Burne Hogarth. Stein was one of the instructors.

"I was friendly with Marvin and Ernie," Ayers told me, "and visited the office in the afternoon on the way to class so I saw what they were working on and knew about Funnyman—and knew I'd like to draw him."

FUNNYMAN
THERE'S A CROOK IN THIS ROOM!
GIVE BACK THAT WATCH!
YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH IT!
HEE! HA-HA-HA-HAAAAA-AAA! THIS IS FUNNIER THAN A BARREL OF MONKEYS!
BUT IN THE COURSE OF THE BATTLE, THE TABLE IS OVERTURNED, REVEALING...
WHO--!?!?
FUNNYMAN!
NOW, NOW, YOU CAN'T WE BE GENTLEMEN-IMPOSSIBLE, AM I? IT SEEMS!?
SOLDIER, IM!
LOOKS LIKE I'M TARGET FOR TONIGHT!
AT THE SOUND OF THE GONG I'LL BE MAKING TRACKS!
GONG
9

The first Funnyman story had page after page of detailed, step-by-step action sequences like this one.

Also probably by Stein.

Shuster occasionally visited the C&I class, and after Ayers met him, he "bombarded" him with Funnyman drawings on penny postcards, he said—"and he put me at a drawing table in his office."

Said Ayers: "Marvin did most of the penciling and inking, and had Ernie and me helping him. I never saw Joe do any penciling."

Ayers said his first paycheck for assisting was October 31, 1947; his last for the comic book penciling was December 8, 1947. "I remember penciling only one complete story," he said. (Probably "The House That Funnyman Built" in #3, Miller says, if not, in the same issue, "For the Honor of Sgt. Harrigan" as well.)

"I never inked any Funnyman pages or panels," Ayers said. "Ernie and I thought Marvin's inking was the utmost best and would stand oohing and ahhing when he did a cover. I can remember doing that."

Around the first of the year in 1948, Ayers started working directly for Sullivan on a comic book about Jimmy Durante. He drew three issues of *Jimmy Durante*, penciling, inking and lettering. The third issue was never published.

By January 1949, Ayers was back penciling *Funnyman*, this time the

comic strip. Sikela did the dailies from the strip's debut on October 11, 1948, until the end of the year; and he continued doing the Sunday strip for another five or six months, with other hands occasionally substituting for him. (March 20 and May 1, for example, are not, I think, Sikela's.)

"January 15, 1949, I got my first check from Joe for penciling the *Funnyman* daily strip," Ayers told me. "My last check for *Funnyman* penciled dailies was May 3, 1949."

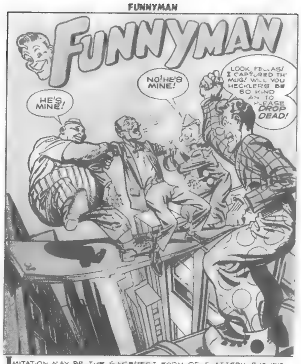
Ayers' drawings were inked by a Manhattan artist Shuster knew, Jerry Goldman, whose name is otherwise lost in the annals of American artistry.

The newspaper version of *Funnyman* continued the same sort of headlong slapstick physical comedy laced with cackling patter and wisecare flippancy that distinguished the comic book incarnation. But none of the strip stories repeat comic book capers, except, in the dailies, the introductory sequence that establishes Larry Davis as Funnyman.

The Sunday strips told different stories than the dailies. In the first adventure, Funnyman unmasks a British criminal posing as a detective from Scotland Yard. In the next, he exposes a songwriting swindle and, after that, foils a robbery at a charity event. He then retrieves a stolen atomic bomb and battles The Mauler, a brutal gang leader.

The Sunday storylines last four to six weeks, with an occasional outing "done in one" purely for the sake of telling a joke. The dailies carry continuities of a month or so duration. Both are highly invested with the kind of physical comedy that animated the comic books.

The *Funnyman* strip ran into the fall of 1949 then stopped. It was in about 50 papers in December 1948, according to *The New Yorker*, but by the next summer, it was evidently


FUNNYMAN
FUNNYMAN
HE'S MINE!
NO! HE'S MINE!
I LOOK FORWARD TO A GREAT DEAL OF MUSIC WHEN HECKLERS BE BOUND AND IN THOSE CASES DEAD!
IMITATION MAY BE THE SINCEREST FORM OF FLATTERY BUT IT'S NOT WELCOME WHEN YOUR COMIC MANNERISMS ARE USED AS THE INSPIRATION FOR COMIC CRIMEBUSTERS CURSE OUR FRIVOLOUS FRIEND NATCH, WHO HAS TO PAY FOR ALL THIS AND FIGHT CRIME, TOO IN THE BATTLE GALORE ELSEWHERE!
FUNNYMAN, COMICMAN and LAFFMAN

Funnyman (by Stein) confronts his imitators...

FUNNYMAN
GONNA BORE US TO TEARS!
AND LAFFMAN! I'M COMICMAN! HO HO HO! HE'S FUNNIER THAN FUNNYMAN!
I GOT CHEAP IMITATORS BUT THEY'RE FUNNIER!
NERTZ!
FRANKLY, I'M GLAD YOU'RE WET!
WHAT'S MORE LIKELY? THAT I'LL BE BEATEN AGAINST ONLY ORIGINAL!
OW!
WHAT?
THANKS FOR THE KIND WORDS ABOUT FUNNYMAN SOMETHING TELLS ME I HAVEN'T BEEN THE ONLY VICTIM OF IMITATORS!
THE END

...and vanquishes them.

fading fast. The Sunday strips in August and September aren't even about Funnyman or Larry Davis: the title character has been supplanted by a bespectacled nincompoop in the Bertie Wooster mold named Reggie van Twerp, who is assisted by a Jeeves-like butler named Higgins.

Reggie van Twerp was the reincarnation of a humorous strip that Siegel and Shuster had conceived in the years before Superman. The team's propensity for comedy is often overlooked in the fevered adulation of their achievement in the science fiction mode of Superman.

Oddly, considering the Superman phenomenon, Shuster did not think of himself as an illustrator of serious adventures. "I was really a cartoonist," he said in an interview in *Nemo* #2. "I loved illustration, but I was essentially—I had a flair for comedy. It just so happened that the adventure strip was what we managed to market."

In high school, Siegel had written a humorous story for the school paper and, later, he and Shuster turned it into a strip, *Goober the Mighty*, a Popeye-inspired take-off on *Tarzan*. They also produced a Laurel and Hardy simulacrum strip called *Snoopy and Smiley* as well as the Wodehousian *Reggie van Twerp*. And in *Slam Bradley*, which they called the precursor of Superman, the two creators had an action hero with a pronounced sense of humor, who accompanied his pugilistic feats with a chorus of wise cracks.

Siegel had even written a mail order course on "How to be Funny" and had formed a sales agency for gag cartoonists, the American Artists League.

In Superman, two of the fea-

BEHOLD! THE DOMAIN OF KING ARTERY!
GEE! JUS' LIKE IN TH' PITCHER-BOOKS!
KNAVES! LOWER THE DRAWBRIDGE FOR SIR LUNCHALOT AND HIS GUEST!
AND ADMIT THAT FEARFUL CREATURE? NEVER!!
HO! HO!--IT WON'T BE TH' FIRST TIME I EVER CRASHED TH' GATE!
YOU ARE INDEED A WONDROUS WIZARD!
TWO SCHEMING PAIRS OF EYES OBSERVE THE UNIQUE ENTRY.
ZOUNDS! AN INTERLOPER!
AND A RIVAL SORCERER, AT TCHAT! TEE-HEE! YOU FEAR HE MAY PROVE A RIVAL FOR THE KING'S FAVOR, EH, SCHMERLIN??
HIS WICKED LITTLE EYES SPARKLING MISCHEVIOUSLY, ZANIE, THE KING'S JESTER, SCAMPERS TO THE SUITE OF HIS SECRET MASTER, SCHEMING QUEEN HOTCHA.
YOUR HUMBLE SERVANT BRINGS STRANGE AND EXCITING NEWS, OH BEAUTEOUS QUEEN! A STRANGER--A WORKER OF MARVELS--HAS ENTERED THE CASTLE!
FETCH MY MOST EXOTIC PERFUMES... ("--MAYHAPS THIS NEW-COMER CAN MATERIALIZE MY AMBITION TO DESTROY KING ARTERY AND RULE---ALONE!-")
3

Funnyman, like Mark Twain's Connecticut Yankee, is transported to King "Artery's" court in "The Medieval Mirthquake," and Stein demonstrates a fine eye and a sure hand for damsel delineation. Shot from the original art.

ture's enduring characters are comical creations—the Prankster, who debuted in *Action* #51 (Aug 1942) and Mr. Mxyzptlk, who shows up first in the *Superman* newspaper strip then in *Superman* #30 (Sep/Oct 1944). Strangely, as Miller points out, both these comedic characters are villains—just as Superman himself was when Siegel conjured him up in "The Reign of the Superman" in the third issue of *Science Fiction*, a magazine they published (Jan 1933).

Why did Funnyman fail in both books and newspapers? Lack of interest, I'd say. But I suspect it was as much the creators' interest as the reading public's.

The comic book, like all of the breed, was doubtless canceled for purely financial reasons. And if it wasn't selling, it was probably because the concept of a bigfoot putty-nosed crime fighter wasn't as appealing to the juvenile buyer as it was to aspiring cartoonists like me and Ayers. Moreover, as Miller points out, sales of costumed hero comics were slumping severely during this period: *Funnyman* had come on the scene a little too late.

Or too early. By another measure, Funnyman was doubtless ahead of its time: four years later, Harvey Kurtzman would invent *MAD* comics, and the newsstands would soon be deluged with manic humor. Among 1948's super-heroes, only Jack Cole's Plastic Man was overtly humorous, but the hero himself was not a comedian and wasn't required, as Larry Davis was, to be funny.

The *Funnyman* newspaper strip, which was formulated well before the comic book was discontinued, expired, I believe, because Siegel and Shuster were not sufficiently engaged in it. Despite their interest in comedy, Siegel, at least, and probably Shuster, too, eventually tired of the antics of the Screwball Scrapper. That they were losing interest is evident in their reviving Reggie van Twerp in the months of the strip's final throes.

On the other hand, Reggie may have been recruited to rescue a strip that was already dropping in circulation. Certainly possible. Probable, in fact. These are reciprocating engines: interest on one side of the drawing board generates interest on the other side, which, in turn, stimulates even more creative energy.

Probably, if Funnyman had generated the following that Superman enjoyed, the strip would have retained its creators' interest as it flourished. But comparing the two creations is pointless: Superman burst in upon an embryonic medium at precisely the right time to attract the attention that assured his continued existence; by the time Funnyman arrived, the marketplace was saturated with comic book titles. *Funnyman* was doubtless lost in the profusion of four-color pulp.

And the newspaper strip, which began after the comic book had expired, hadn't the benefit of the boost a popular comic book might have given it. It had to survive on its own. And perhaps, as Miller suggests, the concept wasn't enough to attract and hold attention on its own in a market that was essentially an adult one.

FUNNYMAN
UP A TALL POLE HE CLAMBERS WITH ANTHROPOID SKILL.
YOU MEAN, YOU'LL TRY!
I GOING TO SHAT YOU LIKE FLY!
THIS CALLS FOR QUICK ACTION— AND A SWIFT, EFFICIENT DEPARTURE!
SOON, YOU'LL GO BOOM!
AS FUNNYMAN STRIKES EARTH, HIS RELEASES THE SPRINGS IN THE SOLES OF HIS SHOES AND THE RECOIL SENDS HIM ALOFT, NO UPWARD KNAV
YEEEOOOWWW!!!
I GOTTA GO!
COME BACK!

From "The Medieval Mirthquake," another action sequence, step-by-step for comedic effect, in which Stein displays a Dorne-like visual sense of humor in such details as the way the fingers on hands are depicted.

Whatever the cause of Funnyman's failure, it was the last collaboration of the team that, by inventing super-heroes, had infused the comic book industry with its defining and sustaining energy. Two disappointments in a row—first in the courts, then in the marketplace—were more than the creativity of the team could survive.

The system, designed, as are all capitalism's systems, to reward entrepreneurs not artists, had sucked the partnership dry of the creative juices that nurtured it jointly. Jerry Siegel would write more comic book stories, solo—first at Ziff-Davis and then, years later, at DC again. But Joe Shuster would draw no more. His influence, however, would continue to shape the medium and, as Dick Ayers testifies, individual careers: "I credit Joe with launching me in my 56 years of illustrating comic books," Ayers said.

Ayers and how many others?

For the sweet sake of poetic justice, it's a comfort to realize that the man who thought of himself as a humorous cartoonist did his last comics work, drawing and supervising, on a funny man. ■

Shel Dorf takes A Trip to Snoopyland...

A few years ago, my cartoonist friend Tom Reese and I took the morning commuter flight to San Francisco. I observed a lady across the aisle reading Peanuts. *It was a brief moment, but put a smile on her face. A slight touch of irony; I'd just seen that magic moment the whole thing is all about!*

We rented a car and drove up the beautiful California coastline to Santa Rosa. Our first stop was the Ice Arena Schulz built for the town. It's a charming place designed to look like a Swiss village. In the wall separating the coffee shop from the lobby are stained glass windows depicting Snoopy skating—a delightful touch. The clerk in the lobby gave us a cheery welcome and I told her our names. She said, "Yes, Sparky's expecting you," and wrote down the directions to his studio. We drove to a hard-to-find street and parked in the lot at a sprawling, unmarked, beautifully landscaped building. It figures. If Snoopy and Charlie Brown were on a sign they would have tons of visitors. We walked into the spacious outer lobby with three secretaries' desks and were greeted by Jill (who has a voice like Peppermint Patty). She took us into Sparky's studio. He greeted us warmly and we walked up the few steps to a sort of half floor where his drawing board is located. I began my interview. We talked for over an hour. So much has been achieved by this remarkable man that I felt I'd just skimmed the surface. However, I did get to ask him many things I'd thought about for years. His replies were right to the point and he was very giving in sideline detail. He is the down-to-earth nice guy we all expect him to be.

We broke for lunch and walked through some country-like roads until we got back to the Ice Arena's coffee shop. From our table we could see through the glass partition and watch the skaters on the ice. The sandwiches were great, the atmosphere very relaxed. No matter how much success this Minneapolis guy has achieved, he's still a levelheaded, responsible human being. And boy! Does he ever love the cartoon medium! He has kept the young fan inside him alive and talks glowingly about the comic strips he loved as a child.

After lunch we walked to a separate two-story building off the parking lot. This building is open to the public, with a large gift shop on the first level where they sell items from books, bed sheets and toys, to quality clothing, all with the Peanuts theme. One of the clerks is the former head of the Peanuts International Fun Club. I'm not certain if she is still handling it now, but she obviously is one of the longtime dedicated ones. The girls greeted Sparky warmly. I'm sure he does this tour often. He recently told me that he has so many visitors that he's had to learn to say "no." He does need some time to do his strip, too! I mention this because he is one of that rare breed of commercially successful cartoonists who still draws his own strip totally himself. He has a strong sense of the ethics involved in it all. He makes time for all the extra work, too.

Getting back to the Snoopy Gallery and Gift Shoppe, I must tell you about the upstairs! A ramp winds around and up until you are on the next level. All along the side wall going up is an enormous carpet with full color cartoons of the Peanuts *characters woven right into it. It's truly a work of art. Once you get up there you see all of the awards, citations and letters of grati*

Snoopy on a roll!

The year Sparky attended the San Diego Comic-Con, he signed a fan's dinner roll!

tude. The experience was one of great pride in the cartoonist's profession. This is one of our guys who has gone farther than anyone else in history. One could argue that Walt Disney did achieve remarkable things with cartoon characters, but Walt did not draw them! Sparky does! In the center of the floor are a few glass cases with shelves of medals awarded to him, rare items (such as rubber dolls of the characters—the very first licensed items), one of his two "Reubens" and his television awards. On the back wall, which runs the length of the building there are framed magazine covers, certificates, photos, letters, original political cartoons that feature the Schulz characters and a thank-you letter from President Reagan. I was conscious of taking up Sparky's time, so I just scanned the wall quickly. Back in Sparky's office we did a few more Q & As for the tape recorder, got some things signed. As we left I had the feeling that there was much more to enjoy, so we agreed that I'd come back for a "part two." The office girls were very sweet. Sparky has a terrific support system in his headquarters. The door to his studio closes for the creative moments and the girls field calls from all over the world. Running Creative Associates is a full time business (a side office contains a beehive of activity) and visitors, no matter how welcome, are a distraction. But the vibes were good! Now that he is gone, I am so glad we made that special trip. Here is the interview.

—Shel Dorf

...and an Interview with

Charles Schulz

interview by Shel Dorf

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Shel Dorf: Anyway, this great celebrity status that you've achieved through…how many years in the business?

Charles Schulz: I guess it's about 36 now.

Dorf: That had to have some humble beginnings, so let's go back to the beginning—what was your first published drawing?

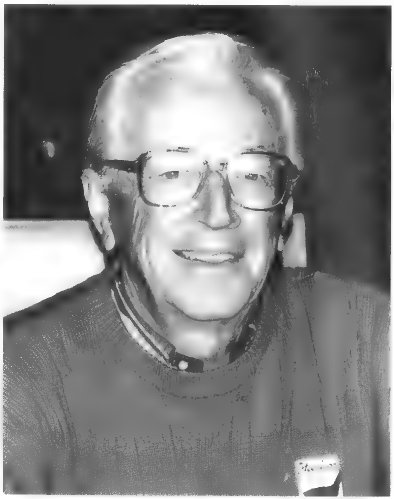
Schulz: Oh, the first published drawing was probably a few little kid's cartoons in *The Minneapolis Star*, but I got into a slight hassle with the editor after he printed two of them, and then I went over to the St. Paul paper which is where *Little Folks* started. I did a few other things, like I made a small drawing of a radio for a man who ran a little Radio Shack store next to my dad's barber shop. I think I charged him $5 for it.

Dorf: Where did this ad appear? Was it in the paper?

Schulz: I don't even know where it appeared, but it was done right after the War when I came home. I remember before that I did a huge sign for a man who ran a dry-cleaning establishment up in the next block from my dad's barber shop, listing all of the garments and how much dry cleaning cost for each one of them, and I was ashamed even to charge him for it. When he asked me how much I wanted I said, "Well, how about $2.50 which I will take out in trade?" So that was probably the first money I ever made from art.

Just before the War, I worked for the Associated Letter Service, which was a direct mail advertising firm in downtown St. Paul, and somehow they found out that I could draw. They had a mimeograph machine and they had photo offset, and I would make a few cartoons for them whenever they needed it—and so for $16 a week they got a delivery boy and someone who worked in the stockroom, wrapping packages and things, and a cartoonist, which was not a bad deal for them, I guess. And then, of course, I got drafted and didn't get a chance to do anything for three years.

My comic strips that I was drawing before World War II were really inspired by *Wash Tubbs* and *Captain Easy*. I loved that action that Roy Crane had put into his work. I described it in the foreword to the book that I was asked to write as a rollicking style of drawing, which is what he had. I don't think he was necessarily very funny. I think if there was any quality of his work that was lacking it was real humor, but the drawing was unsurpassed; and so he was my ideal at that stage. And then, of course, I liked Li'l Abner and the work of Milton Caniff, so I tried drawing things like that. I was even inspired for awhile to do a "Foreign Legion" page like *Prince Valiant*, but of course I got nowhere like it.



Dorf: That must have been very frustrating to you. Doesn't your talent lie more in the "bigfoot" school?

Schulz: (Laughter) I hadn't thought about it.

Dorf: Can you really draw like *Prince Valiant*?

Schulz: Sure. I can draw a lot better than people think I can. I don't think that a person works up to his ability. I think that people who are really pretty good at something work almost below their ability. I don't think you can cartoon well until you can draw well. I don't think it's possible to cartoon a good shoe until you know how to draw an actual shoe very well.

Dorf: Right. Leonard Starr once told me in an interview that he was frustrated to see that teachers were teaching distortion when you have to start with the norm first. Picasso went through a period, for instance, where he was drawing realistically, before he started all the distortion.

Schulz: Well, then too, you see, I was taking the correspondence course in Art Instruction when I was a senior in high school, and in the first year I was out.

Dorf: Was Art Instruction sort of the realistic school or was it cartooning?

Schulz: It was cartooning and illustration. There was an old-time cartoonist who was on the staff, Frank Wing—he drew a feature called *Yesterdays*—and he was of the school where everything should be drawn quite accurately; and although I mailed my lesson work on over, later on after I'd graduated I used to take my cartoons over to him, and I used to listen to him after I got a job there myself, sitting next to him at his desk, telling the students on the Dictaphone, "Draw from life. Draw from life." He always emphasized draw from life. "Take a shoe and place it across the room from yourself and draw it from different angles. Draw the wrinkles in people's clothing." All of this kind of thing. From that, then, you can later exaggerate in your drawing.

I remember copying Mickey Mouse and Popeye and the Three Little Pigs and characters like that when I was small, drawing them on the covers of my notebooks, and then for other kids in the class, when they saw that I had decorated my notebooks that way. I remember one time when, I think I was about in the

ninth grade, there was an English project where we were supposed to write an essay on something, a rather long essay, and one of the other boys in the class illustrated his; and somehow the teacher found out I could draw and said, "Charles, why didn't you do the same thing?" Well, the reason that I didn't do it was I thought that was a rather egotistical thing to do and that it was almost unfair. I didn't think it was right to take advantage of your drawing ability when that wasn't part of the project.

So I never really did much drawing in school, although I took a course when I was a senior in high school that was called illustration, and I liked that. I never liked art classes. They always had us either making woodcuts, which I couldn't stand—I never made a woodcut in my life—or else we had to paint flowers in watercolors, and I hated watercolors. I think the thing that I despised mostly about art classes in school was that they were too slow. I was always very fast at drawing and I would get things done very quickly, and then would have to wait around while the other people who unfortunately weren't given this amount of ability in drawing finished up, and the projects just lasted too long. So I heard in high school that there was a class called illustration which supposedly had more drawing in it, and took that and had a lot of fun. In fact, I got my grades in the last two classes—they were both double-As, which was almost unheard of.

Dorf: Let's take the early days of *Little Folks*. Where did you work? Where was your studio? Was it at home?

Schulz: Well, mainly I did my work at the correspondence school. There was a large room—and when I started there were maybe a dozen instructors, and by the time I quit I suppose there were close to 20 or 25 of us—and we each had a nice large desk. We had certain divisions of the course that we were assigned, and when we completed our work we were allowed to do anything we wanted. So I did a lot of my freelance work and practicing at the desk, and I used their envelopes and their cardboard and their mailing systems to send my things out, and I began to experiment with drawing little, tiny kids. Even Frank Wing said, "You should keep drawing those kids, Sparky. They're kind of good." And one day I sent in one to *The Saturday Evening Post* just cold—a complete little drawing of a kid sitting way out at the end of a chaise lounge with his feet on a little extra stool that he obviously didn't need—and lo and behold they bought it for $40. So I began to send in other little kid cartoons, and I got rejected. I actually sold a few that had adults in them, but the adult drawings were never quite what I wanted them to be. I hadn't achieved any distinct style in drawing adults. But my little kid cartoons were very much like others that were being drawn in that day—I was just one of a pattern that was going on at that time.

Dorf: *Reg'lar Fellers* by…

Schulz: No-no-no-no. That was way before. *Reg'lar Fellers* was not at all like what we were doing in the '50s. *Reg'lar Fellers* was a style of drawing which was good cartooning but was much more realistic. The kids were in reasonable proportions, and they really weren't very funny.

What I introduced, and what is difficult to grasp at this time, was something brand new. I introduced the very slight incident. I can remember creating it sitting at the desk, where what would happen in the three panels that I was drawing at that time was a very brief and slight incident. No one had ever done that before in comic strips. Comic strips were the school of "Well, what are we going to do today?" type—much too drawn out and with a little joke at the end that really was not worth the whole page that it was devoted to. So I changed all of that, and I think very few people realize now, as they look back at my work and compare it, how new what I was doing at that time was. I think I introduced a whole brand-new approach to comic-strip humor.

Dorf: Oh, yes. It was a gentle, quiet type of humor. One in particular that comes to mind is having a leaf fall off a tree.

Schulz: Yeah. Now, I suppose gag cartoonists had done this—people in *The Post*, *Collier's*, *New Yorker*, that sort of thing—but it had never been done in comic strips really before. *Skippy* might have had things like that. It's interesting to look back upon the work of others, and I see that Percy Crosby did a lot of things that were similar to what I did later. Of course, he had a beautiful penline and a wonderful, free way of drawing, and it's a shame that there's no more room these days for that type of drawing. But I think Skippy influenced me quite a bit, too—but by influence I must emphasize I never mean copy.

Dorf: Now, you also write your stuff, so the writing side of your abilities is also important. You write about the human condition very knowingly. Did you have this sort of analysis of life at that early age? Just what were your cartoons about? Were you editorializing or was it just a reflection of life around you?

Schulz: I never thought of myself as having any writing ability at all. I never thought of myself as having any kind of philosophical approach. I really know nothing about psychology or psychiatry or philosophy or anything like that.

Dorf: Let me ask you what the working atmosphere was like at Art Instruction where you started with this gentle, quiet type of humor. Was it a relaxed work situation that was responsible for that?

Schulz: It was a relaxed atmosphere and they were all bright people from different backgrounds who had different ambitions. I had a friend, Jim Sasseville, who could draw just beautifully; and another friend, George Letness, who had one of the finest lines I've ever seen. He could draw anything. They were really very highly talented people there.

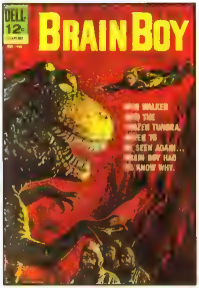
Dorf: And they were content to be teachers? Weren't they trying to get their own strips like you were?

Schulz: No. I was the only one that

[continued on page 56]

At left, illustration by Dick Ayers of a concept supplied by collector/historian Harry Miller (see R.C. Harvey's "Funnies Farrago" this issue for more Funnyman).

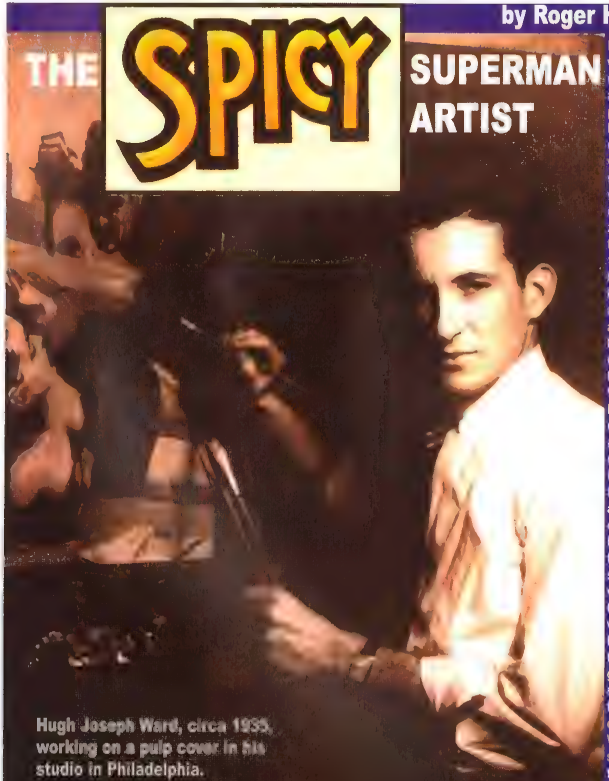
More T-Rex covers, courtesy Pat Calhoun and "Weird Words" (see his column this issue), top to bottom and left to right: *Adventures into the Unknown* #155 (Mar 1955), *Adventures of the Jaguar* #10 (Nov 1962), *Amazing Adventures* #3 (Aug 1961), *Brain Boy* #3 (Dec 1962-Feb 1963), *Gorgo* #15 (Oct 1963), *Rip Hunter Time Master* #7 (Mar/Apr 1962) and *Star Spangled War Stories* #110 (Sep 1963).



WHO WAS H.J. WARD?

by Roger Hill

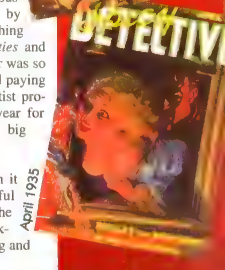
THE SPICY SUPERMAN ARTIST



Hugh Joseph Ward, circa 1935, working on a pulp cover in his studio in Philadelphia.

He was an artist who, ten years ago, received very little attention in the fan press, but has since become a name on many collectors' want lists. H.J. Ward was a unique talent who produced hundreds of pulp magazine covers during the 1930s and 1940s. His forte was beautiful and scantily-clad women, usually being menaced, attacked or tortured by rugged, nasty men with glares of lust in their eyes. Ward eventually became one of the most prolific "spicy" artists ever in pulp cover illustration. In a field somewhat cluttered with "good girl" artists, Ward stands out. I like to think of him as a major illustrator who brought a special element of wonder and fantasy to all he created, and who painted (in real life form for the first time ever) one of the greatest images of a super-hero we are all familiar with—one created during Ward's time, and one still better known than almost any other super-hero!

(next few pages) A gallery of Ward pulp covers. According to Ward's work notebook, he delivered the one immediate right—his first **Spicy Detective Stories** cover painting—to Trojan's offices on July 12, 1934. The issue came out with the October cover date.



Up until now there hasn't been much written or reported about Ward, whose published work ended abruptly during the mid 1940s. He became another one of the many missing artists from that time period who disappeared into the void of unknown artists who were never heard from again. Recently, thanks to [illegible] collector and historian Bob Lavene, some information has finally surfaced, namely Ward's daughter, who just happened to have her father's record book [illegible] of his commercial work executed during his career as an illustrator. It is from this record book, and his daughter, that this article is finally made possible. It's an interesting story, and it happened something like this:

Hugh Joseph Ward was born on March 8, 1909 in the south part of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His parents were of Irish-Catholic heritage and Hugh was the youngest of eight children. He became interested in art at an early age and sometimes used one of his brothers to pose for drawings. He graduated from Philadelphia's Roman Catholic High School in 1926 and went on to attend the Philadelphia College of Art. It was here that he strived to learn all he could about art while having the good fortune to study under the accomplished artist and illustrator N. C. Wyeth.

After college he started out working for the Philadelphia *Inquirer* doing gag cartoons and illustrating various articles of interest. In 1931, after a four-day stay in New York City, Ward made a connection and sold his first cover painting to the Novel Magazine Corporation. This painting turned up on the cover of the November 1931 issue of *Complete Detective Novel*. For this he was paid $25, which, during the depths of the depression, was pretty decent money, and matched his weekly salary at the *Inquirer*. His second cover painting, delivered at the same time as the first one (and for which he was paid the same amount of money) appeared on the cover of the December issue of *Wild West Stories and Complete Novels*.

Around this same time the artist met a young attractive lady from north Philadelphia at a dance and after a two-year courtship he and Viola Conley were married. For reasons that are still unclear, he painted only one pulp cover in 1932. This was for the June issue of *Wild West Stories*. This time he was paid $75, a considerable increase over his first two efforts. Luckily, 1933 turned out to be a better year as Ward produced seven canvases, all of which were used on covers of *Ace-High* and *Sure-Fire*. He was paid between $50 to $60 each for these paintings.

His big break came during the summer of 1934 when he made a connection with publisher Frank Armer at Trojan Publishing Corporation. Trojan was located at 125 East 46th Street in New York City, and was actually owned by Harry Donenfeld of DC Detective Comics, (publishers of *Superman*, *Detective Comics*, etc.). Trojan and DC were located in the same building (known then as the Grand Central Palace Building), only on opposite sides of the structure. On July 12th, Ward delivered his first "spicy" cover painting to Trojan's offices. That painting appeared on the cover of *Spicy Detective Stories* for October, and depicted a girl in bondage, lying on a red rug. Shortly after this he started doing covers for *Spicy Adventure Stories*, another Armer title, at fifty dollars a canvas. He also began working on girlie "pin-up" type covers for various men's magazines, also owned by Donenfeld, but under different publishing names. These titles were *Paris Gayeties* and *Paris Nites*. By the end of 1934, Armer was so impressed with Ward's work he started paying him sixty-five dollars a cover. The artist produced a total of twelve covers that year for which he was paid $635. Definitely big money for the times he was living in.

Ward had a unique style when it came to capturing beautiful women being menaced by the worst kinds of man-brutes and evil-looking characters. His atmospheric shading and

H. J. WARD

lighting also lent itself well to capturing a mood of adventure and mystery into the pictures he produced. His wife, Viola, posed for many of them and even Ward himself would pose as some of the male characters. He worked in oils most of the time using large stretched canvases measuring 24 by 30 inches in size.

According to his work record logbook, in February of 1935 he got a raise from the *Inquirer*, and was now being paid $30 a week. He also started picking up more cover assignments from Frank Armer and by March of that year had been given another raise by Trojan; now making $70 per painting. In May of 1935, Armer gave Ward an additional five dollar raise per painting. At $75 per cover, Hugh Ward was providing Trojan Publishing with, on an average, two paintings a month now. He also did side work for other companies for less money.

By the end of October, having completed twenty-four pulp covers, (totaling upwards of $1500 in payments) Ward quit his job at the *Inquirer*, and went full time with the pulps. He immediately stepped up production and became capable of turning out three to five covers a month. He finished out 1935 with a total of thirty-three pulp covers and the satisfaction of knowing that he was Frank Armer's number one artist. He also added new titles to his ever-growing list of accomplishments. His covers included *Bedtime Stories*, *Mystery-Adventure*, *Pep Stories*, *Prison Life*, *Spicy Mystery Stories*, *Super-Detective Stories* and *Tattle Tales*. He also painted a dust jacket for the hardcover book *Passion Pulls the Trigger*, according to the record book.

Ward continued to labor heavily over his easel and in 1936 turned out an astounding forty-five canvases, most of which went for Armer's different "Spicy" titles. A couple of new titles were added to Ward's portfolio such as *Easy Money* and *Rangeland Love*. For all of these efforts he earned a healthy $3,045 for the year. But 1937 lay ahead and, as it happened, this year proved to be even more productive than any of the past.

The year 1937 brought on a hectic schedule for Hugh Ward as he began painting an average of between four to six pulp cover paintings a month. In January he created his first *Lone Ranger* cover for Frank Armer's new pulp title featuring the popular masked-man and his Indian companion Tonto. Ward painted all but the first issues' cover for this short-lived pulp title that ran eight issues and apparently, due to slow sales, folded in November 1937. He also painted a beautiful black and white full-length painting of the Lone Ranger and Tonto for the King-Trendle Broadcasting Corporation. This was printed up and sent out as a premium to listeners of the Lone Ranger radio program. Ward received payment of $85 for this piece of art which was the highest price earned so far for any job. He finished up 1937 with an amazing 51 paintings. Other new pulp titles added to the list this year included *Romantic Detective Stories*, *Romantic Western Stories* and *Private Detective Stories*.

Ward painted like a madman during the first seven months of 1938, and in August, for some reason, decided to take time off. His ledger book is void of entries for most of August through December, except for a painting he sold to the prestigious *Liberty* magazine for $200—the highest price he would ever earn for a single painting. The piece was used on the January 28th issue depicting a young boy learning how to dance. Due to this cover sale, the indication might be that Ward could have been using his time off from painting pulp cov-

Spicy Mystery Stories cover, circa 1930s, obviously influenced by the 1933 RKO classic, King Kong.

Between 1937 and 1939, Ward did several paintings for the King-Trendle Broadcasting Corporation...

...all were used for promoting The Lone Ranger, who was, at that time, about the most popular western radio star.

ers, to drum up new accounts from the higher-paying, and more respectable, "slick" magazine market. It is known that the artist was not exactly happy with the types of subject matter he was required to paint for his "spicy" creations. No doubt it was a bit tiring and repetitious doing the same subject matter over and over, but the pay was simply too good to resist. At the tail end of 1938, and leading into early 1939, Ward returned to the easel and turned out five more *Lone Ranger* paintings for King-Trendle. These paintings were used for various radio promotions with Ward being paid $125 for each. Only 27 paintings were completed for the year.

In February of 1939, the artist returned to his easel and began knocking out pulp covers for Frank Armer. By mid summer he had added another popular radio character to his resume when he completed four beautiful *Green Hornet* paintings. These were also commissioned by the King-Trendle Corporation and were used as radio promotions and covers for big little books. He completed a fifth *Green Hornet* painting in November. King-Trendle paid him the same amount he had earned for the *Lone Ranger* paintings—$125 each. He continued his busy output for the Trojan line and ended up with 38 canvases for the year.

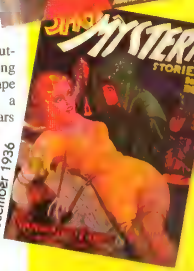
The artist would increase his output to 48 canvases during the coming year of 1940, and even took on a few new pulp titles in the process including *Argosy*, *Red Star Mystery* and *Red Star Adventures*. He also painted a canvas that was commissioned solely for the purpose of hanging on a wall which today might very well be considered the most valuable piece of art that H. J. Ward ever created.

This happened during the summer of 1940, when Harry Donenfeld, President of National DC Detective Comics, decided he wanted Ward to do a special commission. Donenfeld wanted a full-figure portrait of the main character who had become the companies' most prized property during the preceding three years. The special commission was a dynamic and glorious full-length portrait of the "Man of Tomorrow," (as he was then known)—SUPERMAN! This outstanding piece of work, depicting Superman with hands on hips, cape flowing lightly in the wind, and a cityscape in the background, appears to be the first painted image of Superman ever conceived by any artist. The painting may have been contracted through Robert Maxwell, whose office was also located in the Grand Central Palace Building with Trojan and DC. Maxwell worked for

August 1936

November 1936

November 1936



December 1936

Liberty magazine cover dated January 28, 1939, which is one of the few cover paintings sporting a full "Hugh J. Ward" signature, and as it turned out it earned the artist the highest price he ever received for a single painting during his career. A whopping $200.

WHY I SHOT VOM RATH by HERSCHEL GRUNSPAN
Liberty 5¢
DEATH TAKES A BRIDE HOLIDAY
Short Faith Baldwin's Exciting New Love Story in This Issue

H. J. WARD

Donenfeld in several capacities over the years, and when Superman took to the air on radio in February of 1940, Maxwell was put in charge of Superman licensing.

Ward's treatment of this colorfully clad American icon was heroic and majestic, and a true masterpiece in the annals of comics history. His realistic approach to painting made the character come to life for DC and most others who ventured into their offices at 480 Lexington Avenue and saw it hanging on the wall opposite the entry. Maxwell used the painting as a backdrop for several publicity photo sessions with radio star Bud Collier standing next to it, since Collier played the voice of Superman on the radio series.

Ward's personal ledger book pertaining to this painting indicates that the art was finished and delivered to DC on June 24, 1940. The ledger entry says the painting was created "to hang on wall." For this piece the artist was paid $100. Over the next twenty years this single figure painting of Superman was used many times as a guide for other DC artists to draw from, for use in various advertising and promotional campaigns. In 1974 DC used Ward's painting on the cover of their oversized Superman reprint edition.

With the income Hugh Ward had earned in 1940, he and Viola began having a new house built in the suburbs of Philadelphia. It was completed in August of 1941 and it was here over the next four years that the artist would paint and create his special brand of pulp illustration. The studio was massive and located upstairs. It had a large window to receive the northern light and a very high ceiling, which gave the place a spaciousness conducive to work. Like most painters, Ward enjoyed standing back and getting a better view of his work on the easel. He worked all day and often into the night trying to meet publishers' deadlines. His fingers were yellowed with nicotine stains from a habit of heavy smoking. He enjoyed life to its fullest and was liked by everyone who met him. He was easy to get along with and had a quick and dry sense of humor. The family (now with a daughter) enjoyed the frequent get-togethers with his brothers and sister and their families. Life seemed very good for the 32-year-old artist.

Ward worked very hard from 1941 to 1944 turning out mostly pulp covers for various publishers. In late 1942 Frank Armer gave him a raise to $85 per cover, and in 1943, moved him up to $100 each. Wards' last entry in his record

At $125 each, Ward turned out several Green Hornet paintings for King-Trendle in 1939...

Another beautiful Green Hornet painting, executed in black and white and gray tones for King-Trendle, probably for a radio giveaway premium. From a tweaked snapshot of the original painting.

Argosy cover for March 15, 1942. This lady, likely Ward's wife, Viola, seems to have posed for many of the artist's cover paintings.

The same lady appears again on the cover of Spicy Mystery Stories for April 1942, shown here next to the original cover painting, from the collection of Robert Lesser

book is for a *Spicy Detective Stories* cover painted in April of 1944. It was around this time that the artist was drafted into the U.S. Army and sent to Camp Blanding, Florida, where he began training in Morse code. While there he did some charcoal portrait work for fellow soldiers, but basically didn't care much for military life.

He wrote a letter to a friend at Trojan Publishing shortly after entering the military. The letter was passed on to Frank Armer who wrote back a letter telling Ward "There's little of news to write. The routine here has not changed much; I'm playing around with a few new cover men but have found no one who can occupy your particular niche." At the end of the letter, Armer says "All I can say in closing is to remember that we're all plugging for you and if you must stay in, here's hoping that you'll find it more pleasant as time goes on."

Unfortunately Ward didn't. Shortly after this he began to experience a great deal of pain in his right arm and shoulder. Rather quickly, the doctors diagnosed a tumor in the lining of his lung. The prognosis was not good. He passed away on February 7, 1945, at the young age of 36 years.

Of all the artists who came and went during the pulp publishing years, H. J. Ward is recognized as one of the major talents of that time. His prolific output speaks for itself. All total he turned out 417 paintings, all of which, at one time or another, were published. Ward had an incredible imagination and a flair for capturing the beautiful, the bizarre, and the essence of what a good pulp cover should look like. He took advantage of that talent and gave us a lot of great images to collect and savor. He also gave us that classic real-life interpretation of the Man of Steel!

Comic Book Marketplace salutes Hugh Joseph Ward, who, at one time, was an obscure artist among the many out there who are missing. Thank goodness we can now say, not anymore. Hugh Joseph Ward has been found, and we celebrate his many accomplishments and his career in the field of fantasy art.

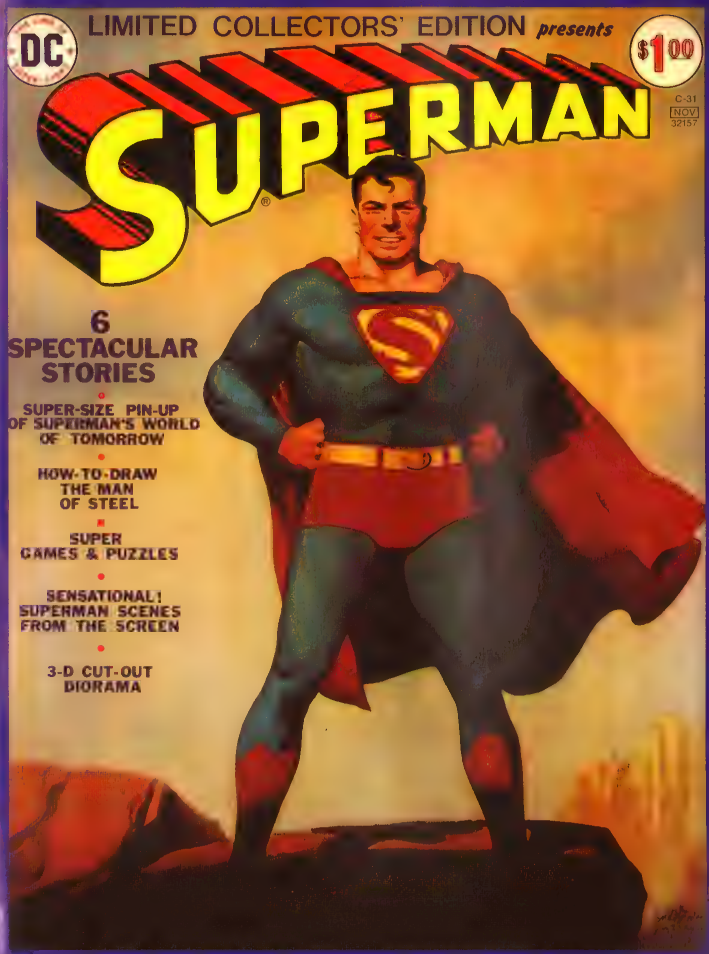
Once again, the same model poses for the cover of Dan Turner, Hollywood Detective, from September 1934. Shot from the original painting. Ward originals fetch huge sums of money in the marketplace, if you can find one for sale.

This photo, taken Spring 1941, shows Ward's painting hanging in what could be DC's conference room or Donenfeld's office, located in the Grand Central Palace Building, 480 Lexington Avenue. From left to right: (1) Bud Budner, President of the Atlantic Coast Independent Distributors Association, (2) Carroll Rheinstrom, Head of MacFadden Publications, International (DC's overseas distributor), (3) Harry Donenfeld, President of National DC Comics, (4) unknown, (5) Max Gaines, President of All-American Comics, (6) Jack Liebowitz, Accountant and business partner with Donenfeld.

Publicity photo of Bud Collier standing in front of Ward's painting with "Mutual" microphone, circa 1942-1943. Note that the painting had changed just a little compared to the photo in Donenfeld's office. Ward had been required to revise the image, changing the hairstyle slightly and enlarging the "S" on his chest.

Promotional photo of Bud Collier, who supplied the voice of Superman on the radio, standing next to Ward's incredibly large painting. This wall location may actually be where the painting was hung for many years, in front of the entry to the DC offices in the Grand Central Palace Building.

Superman portrait giveaway, created by DC National Comics in 1942, was just one of the promotional images that were based on Ward's initial painting. It was used over and over through the years.



The first printing of Ward's painting was on the cover of DC's over-sized **Limited Collectors' Edition** #C-31 (Oct/Nov 1974).

the PULP Roots

by **Will Murray**

When Bob Kane used to talk about inspirations for the Batman, he invariably cited sources ranging from Leonardo da Vinci to Johnston McCulley's Zorro, with special mention going to a silent film, *The Bat Whispers*. Writer and Batman co-creator Bill Finger was more down to earth. He saw Batman as constructed out of heroes like Sherlock Holmes, The Shadow and Doc Savage—with a dash of Douglas Fairbanks thrown in.

Batman character © DC Comics. All rights reserved.

of
BAT MAN
10
DETECTIVE
SPRING ISSUE
A THRILLING PUBLICATION
G. WAYMAN Jr
THE BATMAN

Somehow, neither originator ever mentioned a pulp private eye named Dawson Clade. Framed for a crime he didn't commit, Clade was sentenced to die in the electric chair. But thanks to a sympathetic warden he survived to assume a new identity. Holed up in a backwoods cabin, Clade tried to figure out what he was going to do next, when inspiration struck:

As the door of the cabin closed behind the Governor's secretary, Dawson Clade dropped into a chair. He heard the roadster's motor start, and then the sound faded into the distance as Martin Fenbeck drove away.

Clade's brain was working swiftly. He realized that he was a dead man in the eyes of the world. He would not be able to appear in public unless he was carefully and cleverly disguised. No one save Fenbeck and the prison warden knew or should ever know that Dawson Clade still lived.

Yet he was one man working alone against the crooks and the corrupt politicians who went hand in glove with the evil forces of the underworld. For that reason he must become a figure of sinister import to all of these people. A strange Nemesis that would eventually become a legendary terror to all of crimedom.

Clade rose and began to pace the floor. He was nervous, restless. Reaction had set in. What he had been through as he sat in the electric chair had left him shaky. Far more so than he had realized up to the moment.

He was still thinking. Just what the character would be that he intended to assume was still vague in his mind. He only knew that it would have to be some nubilous [sic] creature of the night that lurked in the shadows.

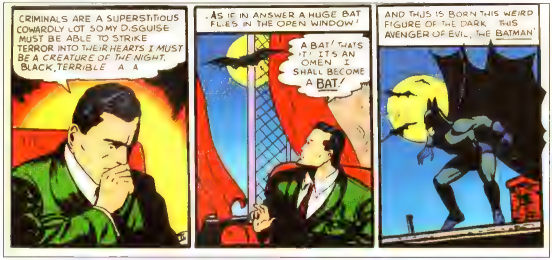
He glanced at the oil lamp burning on a table. Then he swung around, suddenly tense. In the shadows above his head there came a slithering, flapping sort of sound.

Clade leaped back instinctively as something brushed past his cheek. Again the flapping wings—a weird rustling sound. Terror overcame him for an instant as something brushed against his hair, caught in a tangled lock. Something that seemed unspeakably evil. He reached up, tore at it with fingers that had suddenly grown frantic. He flung the thing aside. As he did so he saw that it was a bat. An insectivorous mammal, with its wings formed by a membrane stretched between the tiny elongated fingers, legs and tail.

As the creature hovered above the lamp for an instant it cast a huge shadow on the cabin wall.

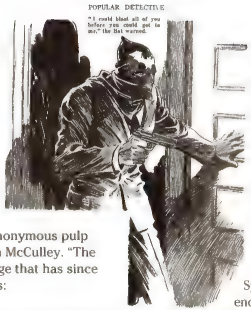
"That's it!" exclaimed Clade aloud. "I'll call myself 'The Bat.'"

Sound familiar? Didn't Bruce Wayne say nearly those same words in 1939 after a bat flew into *his* window? For the record, Wayne's exact words were: "Criminals are a superstitious cowardly lot. So my disguise must be able to strike terror into their


CRIMINALS ARE A SUPERSTITIOUS COWARDLY LOT. SO MY DISGUISE MUST BE ABLE TO STRIKE TERROR INTO THEIR HEARTS. I MUST BE A CREATURE OF THE NIGHT. BLACK, TERRIBLE. A A
AS IF IN ANSWER A HUGE BAT FLIES IN THE OPEN WINDOW!
A BAT! THAT'S IT! IT'S AN OMEN! I SHALL BECOME A BAT!
AND THUS IS BORN THIS WEIRD FIGURE OF THE DARK. THIS AVENGER OF EVIL... THE BATMAN!

hearts. I must be a creature of the night, black, terrible... A... A... A bat! That's it! It's an omen. I shall become a bat!"

Dawson Clade made his fateful decision in the November 1934 *Popular Detective* magazine. The story was called "The Bat Strikes." The author was C.K.M. Scanlon—in reality a house name. To this day no one knows who really wrote the story. Suspects range from an anonymous pulp writer to Zorro creator Johnston McCulley. "The Bat Strikes" continued in language that has since morphed into super-hero clichés:



The whole plan was growing clearer as his brain worked busily. Disguised as a human bat, he would take up the trail. Working always by night, and remaining in hiding during the day. He would secure the evidence against crooks of all descriptions, and then call in the police.

It would be the police who made the final arrests. But they would know it was the Bat who had led them to their quarry.

It would be the Bat, strange creature of the night, who would combat all the forces of crime, who would bring fear into the hearts of the lawless. The police would gradually learn that the Bat was working with them.

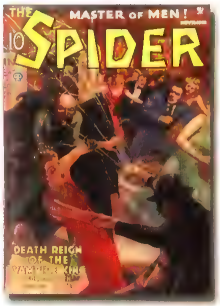
"In the hangouts and lodging places of the evil forces of the underworld," the author continued, virtually inventing the prose style of the comic book, "and in the ostentatious homes of the corrupt politicians, there was none who realized that an unseen force had been created that would eventually prove their downfall. And that was the Bat!"

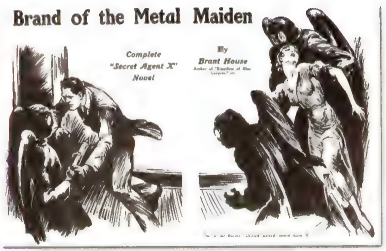
However, the Bat didn't exactly dress up as a human bat like Batman. He wore a shapeless black hood over his head with the image of a white bat burning on the forehead. A somber business suit completed his crime-fighting ensemble. To better fight the lawless, the Bat carried a stupefying vapor gun.

There were only four published Bat stories, all from the Thrilling pulp group, publishers of *The Phantom Detective* and later of comic books under the names Better and Nedor. The Bat series quickly faded from memory—except perhaps in the mind of Bill Finger.

Mysterioso characters who took their inspiration from bats were actually pretty common in 1930's pulp magazines. The Spider fought a bat-winged villain called the Bat Man in one 1935 adventure, "Death Reign of the Vampire King." This Bat Man bore no resemblance to any other bat-inspired pulp hero, but suggests the future Batman foe, Man-Bat. When The Spider—really Richard Wentworth—first encounters the Bat Man, he finds him seated on a throne of skulls:

Wentworth shook his head violently to clear it, peered again at the throne. He saw now that it was a man seated there, a man with great leathery wings stretching from his shoulders. Now and then he waved them back and forth languidly. Wentworth saw these things without actually taking them in, but presently the last of the fogginess





lifted from his brain, leaving it brilliantly clear. He peered into the face of the creature on the throne and, uncontrollably, a stronger shudder plucked at his muscles. Was this the Bat Man then?

The face was incredibly hideous, the nose sliced off, the whole countenance drawn up toward that wound into a striking and hideous semblance of a bat's convoluted face. He had even attached huge, pointed ears to his head, and those wings...Wentworth pulled himself together with a bracing of his shoulders, a lift of his chin. There was that about the man and his face that made his blood run cold, but it was trickery. It must be....

Actually a masked super-criminal, the Bat Man wore a set of working batwings. He and the Spider, also winged like a bat, ultimately square off against one another in deadly aerial combat.

Secret Agent X also tangled with a host of nameless flying bat men in 1936. They were the goggle-eyed minions of the cruel Emperor Zero who wore leather masks and also flew with the assistance of mechanical wings. That tale was dubbed "Brand of the Metal Maiden."

But there's one who really stands out. He appeared in the January 1939 issue of *The Phantom Detective*, in "The Yacht Club Murders." When he makes his first appearance, the Bat seems to be a blend of The Shadow, Zorro and Batman:

A figure which might have been spewed from the bowels of hell crouched four feet away. A wide-brimmed, black slouch hat, pulled low, almost concealed the black velvet mask beneath it. It was a mask which covered every bit of the face, straps from it going back to be fastened to the base of the skull. There was a cross gash opening for breathing, and diamond-shaped slits for the eyes.

A black cape, close-gathered at the neck, dropped in a tentlike flare about the crouching figure. Whalebone ribs in it enforced the flare from the body. Black-gloved hands were thrust through long slits in front of the cape. The right hand balanced a long, slender, evil-looking rapier.

Swaying slightly, that figure personified evil, stealth and crime. It looked like some monstrous bat!

The irony here is that the author behind the house name

SUDDENLY A GIGANTIC CONE OF LIGHT PIERCES THE DUSK OF DAY AND SICKENS AN EERIE SYMBOL AGAINST A BLACK CLOUD--THE SILHOUETTE OF A GIANT BAT!
THAT'S COMING FROM THE SEARCHLIGHT ON THE ROOF OF POLICE HEADQUARTERS!
YES!--THEY'RE CALLING THE BATMAN.
WE'VE GOT BUSINESS TO ATTEND TO, DICK!

First appearence of the Bat Signal from Detective Comics #60.

in this case was Charles Greenberg, who in the 1940s walked away from The Phantom to follow *Phantom Detective* editor Jack Schiff to DC and script the four-color adventures of Batman.

Since the Phantom Detective was in reality bored society playboy Richard Curtis van Loan,

Phantom novel co-written by Norman A. Daniels and the man who later ran Fiction House's comic book line, Jack Byrne, introduced a novel way for Richard Curtis Van Loan's mentor, newspaper publisher Frank Havens, to summon the Phantom in emergencies. A later novel describes the method:

Out across Central Park, rising high above the skyscrapers of the Roaring Forties to the south, blinking red lights on Frank Havens' towering Clarion Press Building gleamed now, flashing warningly, vividly against the purplish background of foreboding storm clouds.

The Phantom's signal!

Neither exclamation nor tremor betrayed the vitalizing shock that whipped Dick Van Loan's nerves into tensed

Greenberg must have thought it would be a piece of cake to script the exploits of Bruce Wayne. In fact, he found it infinitely harder.

Another piece of Phantom Detective impedimenta may have inspired the Bat Signal, which debuted in "Case of the Costume-Clad Killers" (*Detective Comics* #60, Feb 1942), *Dealers in Death*, a 1936

alertness. His signal—from Frank Havens. Around him the gay party went on, heedless and merrily ignorant of the dire call. Even Muriel Havens, the nationally powerful publisher's daughter, had no inkling of the grim Phantom drama being signaled in by those rapidly winking lights atop her father's Clarion tower.

Dick Van Loan's cryptic smile gave no hint of the driving turmoil seething within him as he deciphered that flashing code message:

Calling the Phantom—Come to my office—Hurry—This is a murder call—Havens—Calling the Phantom—

The dots and dashes kept on winking ominously, would continue to blink that secret message until the Phantom himself contacted Frank Havens. Van Loan damned himself mentally. He'd been idling here, dancing, unalert to that urgent message.

Of course, the ultimate pulp playboy-turned-crime fighter was Lamont Cranston, the best-known alias of The Shadow. Kane and Finger literally ransacked old back numbers of *The Shadow* to fuel Batman's early adventures.

Bill Finger was pretty honest about his sources. He openly admitted that, "My first script was a take-off of a Shadow story." In 1939, he had Batman scale a building using a pair of "suction gloves" and kneepads identical to a rig The Shadow had been using for that same purpose since the early '30s. This was in *Detective* #42. The Hugo Strange story in *Batman* #1 where Batman battles giant monsters was a direct steal of the 1934 Doc Savage novel, *The Monsters*. There was more to it than that. All through the pulp magazines of the Depression you will find scattered pieces of what would in later years become the world of Batman.

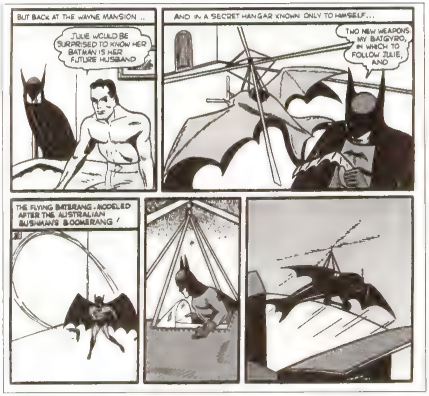
And Finger was not the only purloiner of pulp gimmicks. Gardner Fox introduced the first Batplane and Batarang in the famous *Detective* #31 story where Batman battles the Monk. The early Batplane was called the Batgyro. It was a bat-shaped gyroplane, a primitive helicopter. The Shadow's aircraft of choice was a night-flying black autogyro.

As for the Batarang, it was not as original as it might seem. Witness the following excerpt from the 1934 Shadow novel, *Lingo*.

Pressing hard against the step-like wall of the Hotel Framton, the Shadow lifted an object from the package at his feet. It showed yellow against the dull white edge of the roof. The object was a cross-shaped boomerang. Its two crossbars were joined by a bolt that projected an inch beneath the surface of the lower piece.

Clinging to the block-shaped projection, the Shadow delivered a short underhand throw. The boomerang whistled sadly as it whirred upward across the street.

The
BAT MAN
BY
BOB KANE
IN THE STRANGE LIVES OF THOSE DENIZENS OF THE HIDDEN WORLD OF CRIME, THE BATMAN, WINGED FIGURE OF VENGEANCE HAS BECOME A MENACE...


BUT BACK AT THE WAYNE MANSION...
JULIE WOULD BE SURPRISED TO KNOW HER BATMAN IS HER FUTURE HUSBAND
AND IN A SECRET HANGAR KNOWN ONLY TO HIMSELF...
TWO NEW WEAPONS, MY BATGYRO, BY WHICH TO FOLLOW ZULIE, AND
THE FLYING BATERANG - MODELED AFTER THE AUSTRALIAN BUSHMAN'S BOOMERANG!

Its yellow blades enabled the Shadow to observe its course. The boomerang spun above the rail of the promenade. Circling lazily to the right, it rounded the griffon-headed post; then gathered speed as it zoomed back through the still night air.

Clinging to the block, the Shadow reached out and plucked the boomerang from space. His trial throw was satisfactory.

He produced another object—the tiny spindle wound with a threadlike coil. The spindle had a hollow center. The Shadow pressed it to the bolt that projected beneath the boomerang. The spindle clamped there.

Drawing off a length of the thread, the Shadow retained the end in his left hand while he again grasped the block. Once more, the boomerang whizzed from his expert right. This time it clipped close to the parapet of the Hotel Moselle. It barely passed the pillar with the griffon heads.

Then the missile skimmed back from the night. Again, the Shadow took it deftly upon its return. Only a few coils remained about the spindle. The Shadow had encircled the corner of the parapet with a line of strong thread that remained invisible, so slender was its form.

The boomerang's work was done. To the outer end of the thread, the Shadow attached a reel of stout fish line. Drawing in the free end of the thread, he made this new, stronger connection as a bridge between the Hotel Framton and the pillar of Rook Hollister's unused promenade.

This line completed, the Shadow could trace it through the slight glow reflected from the sky. He produced a coil of wire that was as strong as a thin cable, despite its pliability. He hooked that wire to the fish line and drew in the cord. The result was a double-wired bridge, across and upward. Two lines of glistening steel, each capable of sustaining a greater weight than that of a human being.

Once The Shadow has his bridge ready, he resorts to a handy piece of equipment Bruce Wayne never thought of.

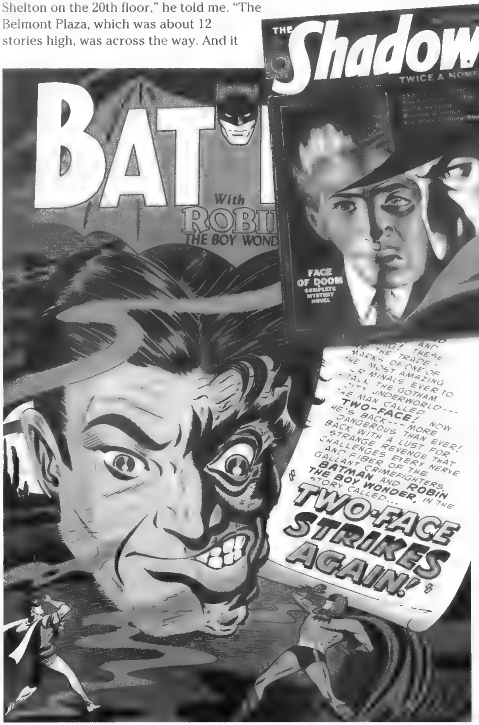
He brought out the object that he had placed beneath his cloak. A small, six-inch car, with roller-bearing wheels. The

Shadow unclamped one side; affixed the carrier to the descending wire; then closed the clamp. Hands gripping a bar below the wheels, he poised upon the edge of the roof, ready for a swift flight downward.

As it happened, Gibson remembered that he was inspired to give The Shadow that particular tool from the view of his New York hotel room:

"I got that idea while I was staying at the Hotel Shelton on the 20th floor," he told me. "The Belmont Plaza, which was about 12 stories high, was across the way. And it had ornaments in a sort of penthouse effect. That was where I got the idea that the boomerang could be thrown around and so forth."

Batman's utility belt seems to have been modeled after a many-pocketed gadget belt Doc Savage started wearing in 1937. He called it his emergency kit. Like Batman, Doc used it to carry capsules of knockout and other useful gases.



Although Doc also drove a fleet of gadget-equipped bulletproof cars that could have given Kane and Finger ideas, no pulp supercar ever came close to the Batmobile. For its true inspiration, only the Green Hornet's Black Beauty makes sense. The Hornet debuted on radio in 1936.

Batman's villains seemed to have been lifted largely from the Phantom Detective, who fought colorful supercriminals like The Green God and the Crimson Clown. Take the Keyboard Killer from Charles Greenberg's 1940 novel, *The Phantom and the Melody Murders*. Like the Joker, the Riddler and so many others, he would leave clues to future crimes via taunting lyrics, challenging the police to catch him. They never could, but the Phantom did.

One 1938 Shadow foe could easily have inspired Two-Face. The Face used glowing green makeup and special lighting to distort his true visage. On the cover of Face of Doom, he's depicted with the classic Two-Face split look.

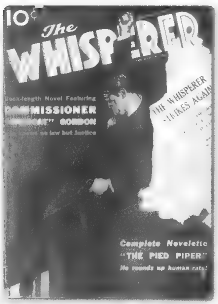
Controversy still rages over who truly created the Joker—Bob Kane or Jerry Robinson. But the idea of a clownlike lord of the underworld by that name predates Batman's Joker by three years.

Theodore Tinsley's detective hero Terry "Bulldog" Black encountered this vaguely-familiar figure in "The Grim Joker":

Terry gasped. He was gazing at the white, waxen countenance of an overgrown doll! Except for the splash of red paint on either cheek and the glitter of the eyes, there was no color whatever on that blank, waxen face. The figure was dressed in a shroud!

This pulp Joker from the July 1937 issue of Street & Smith's *The Whisperer*, is no chemically-disfigured crook, however.

The Whisperer may also have inspired another famous Batman cast member. The crime-fighting Whisperer was in reality Police Commissioner James Gordon!



If all these borrowings and inspirations weren't enough, a bizarre coincidence took place at virtually the same time Bob Kane and Bill Finger were concocting Batman out of bits and pieces of prior heroes, many of which were culled from Thrilling pulps. Thrilling editor-in-chief Leo Margulies asked Phantom writer Norman A. Daniels to create a new pulp hero in the tradition of The Shadow for *Black Book Detective*.

Daniels came up with District Attorney Tony Quinn, who after being blinded and scarred in an acid attack instigated by crime boss Oliver Snate, decides, as Dawson Clade did only five years before, to assume a new persona to go after Snate and all of his ilk.

Quinn mulls over his decision with his valet, Silk Kirby, who just happens to be a reformed confidence man:

"But how are you going to handle it, sir?" Silk wanted to know. "Your face, if you'll pardon me, is disfigured. It won't be a pleasant sight when you first see it. You'll be recognized." "My face?" Quinn leaned back and compressed his lips.

"That can be taken care of. Plastic surgery can make it over But not now, Silk. Not now! I want people to think I'm helpless

and that I haven't enough interest in life to have my features mended. We'll operate anonymously. No one must know who we are. I'll have to wear a mask, of course—a complete hood. I suppose, if my features are as bad as that doctor said they were."

"Yes sir," Silk nodded, "it will have to be a hood. I'll make one, sir, of silk. Black silk, that can't be seen in the night. You can dress in black also and be nothing more than a dim shadow in the darkness."

"But there must be some means of identification," Quinn pursed his lips. "Something by which men can recognize me. An insignia—a name, Silk—I have it! I've been blind—as blind as a bat. I still am so far as anyone knows. I shall prowl during the night. Bats are blind and fly by night also. I'll be the bat, Silk. The Black Bat!"

Before Daniels can be accused of ripping off the C. K. M. Scanlon's Bat, the truth proves even stranger. Daniels originally called his crime fighter the Tiger, after the fierce stripe-like acid scars that marred his face. Leo Margulies, perhaps remembering the original Bat—or more likely the Phantom Detective foe of the same name who had been published earlier in 1939—decided to change the Tiger to the Black Bat.

A few chapters later, a Snate henchman named Walker runs afoul of Silk Kirby, and for the first time the Black Bat is revealed in all his cloaked mystery:

When he opened his eyes, the office was flooded with light.

Silk sat on the edge of the desk, but Walker didn't see him. His eyes were riveted upon a weird form that loomed not half a dozen feet away. The man was tall, very well built and there was a shining black hood and winglike cape encasing his head and shoulders. Merciless eyes watched Walker's movements. The killer shivered. Those eyes got him. With an effort he tore his gaze away. He saw the four men who had been a part of his trap. They were lying side by side and the floor around them was smeared with blood. Upon the forehead of each man was the insignia of a tiny black bat.

"Who—who are you?" Walker found his voice after a moment.

He sat up, bracing himself with his hands. As he did so, he felt the cool butt of a pistol beneath him. Walker closed his fingers around the gun and confidence surged through him once more.

The eerie figure, dressed entirely in black, moved like some grim shadow. The voice made Walker shiver again.

"I am new to men like you," the voice intoned. "You might call me the Black Bat. Fools like you have brought me into existence. So long as your breed lives, the Black Bat will work

Vol. 9, No. 2 — BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE MAGAZINE — July, 1939

BRAND OF THE BLACK BAT

A Complete Book-Length Novel Introducing Tony Quinn, the Nemesis of Crime

By G. WAYMAN JONES

Author of "Alias Mr. Death," "The Murder Club," etc.

CHAPTER I

Visit by Night

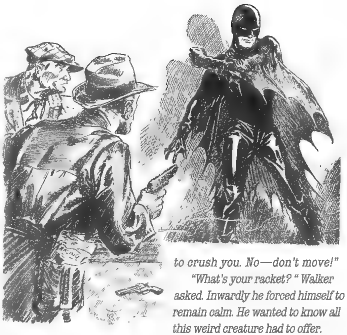
TONY QUINN stirred restlessly in his sleep as a man's form moved silently across the room. The intruder was in a hurry, but he made not the slightest sound. Moonlight brought him into relief a moment, showing him to be about forty with a high, bald forehead, pointed, narrow nose and a small mouth. While there was nothing sinister or evil looking about him, he did exude one specific quality—that of being slippery.

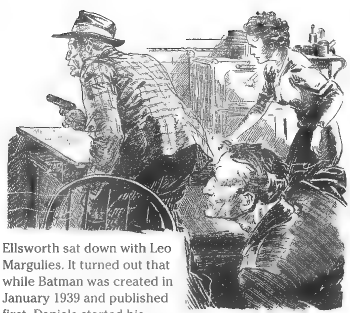
He touched the sleeping man's shoulder and shook him slightly. In a flash Tony Quinn was awake. His brain oriented itself immediately and one hand darted beneath his pillow to come forth with a .38 automatic.

"Wait, sir," the intruder whispered. "I'm doing you a great favor. Hear me out—please."

"Go ahead," Tony Quinn said softly. "Explain what you're doing in the house of the District Attorney."

A MYSTERIOUS AVENGER IS BORN!





to crush you. No—don't move!"

"What's your racket?" Walker asked. Inwardly he forced himself to remain calm. He wanted to know all this weird creature had to offer.

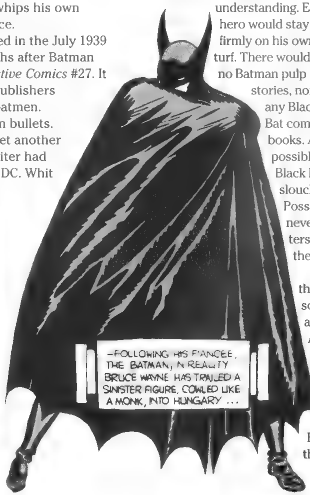
"Racket?" the Black Bat asked and behind the mask lips smiled grimly. "The extermination of rats. My methods are as ruthless as yours, Walker."

As Walker soon finds out when he pulls out his concealed weapon. The Black Bat whips his own automatic and shoots him in the face.

"Brand of the Black Bat" appeared in the July 1939 *Black Book Detective* just two months after Batman made his auspicious debut in *Detective Comics* #27. It wasn't long before the respective publishers became aware of their competing batmen. Lawsuit threats flew like Tommygun bullets.

By another weird coincidence, yet another former Phantom Detective ghostwriter had just taken over as editor-in-chief of DC. Whit Ellsworth sat down with Leo Margulies. It turned out that while Batman was created in January 1939 and published first, Daniels started his Black Bat novel in November 1938—long before *Detective* #27 hit the stands. Plagiarism was out of the question.

So they hammered out an understanding. Each hero would stay firmly on his own turf. There would be no Batman pulp stories, nor any Black Bat comic books. As a possible concession to Batman, the Black Bat sometimes donned a black slouch hat to cover his earless cowl. Possibly as a return favor, Batman never carried a gun. Both characters sported similar wrist fins, but the Black Bat soon dropped his.



It's fortunate for all concerned that they found a workable solution. The Black Bat appeared regularly until *Black Book Detective* was cancelled in 1953. Norman Daniels wrote nearly all of them—although it's been rumored that Whit Ellsworth had been responsible for a few.

Batman of course continues to this day.

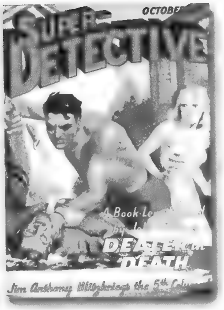
It's ironic, because the

A winged skeleton and evening attire are not what is normally viewed in the Batcave.

Black Bat would have made a great comics super-hero. After being blinded, he's subjected to a secret eye transplant, which restores his sight and somehow bequeaths him with the power to see in the dark.

Even Batman couldn't do that.

Batman borrowings continued even after *Detective Comics* #27. In 1940, Trojan Publications launched *Super-Detective*, featuring the adventures of a Doc Savage clone called Jim Anthony. Part Commanche, Anthony operated out of The Tepee, an underground cavern in the Catskills. A diagram of this subterranean lair appeared in the November 1940 issue and looks uncannily like the Bat Cave, which it predates, right down to the underground hanger and deserted barn with grain silo!

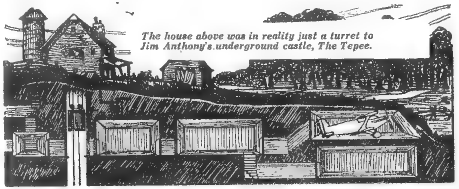


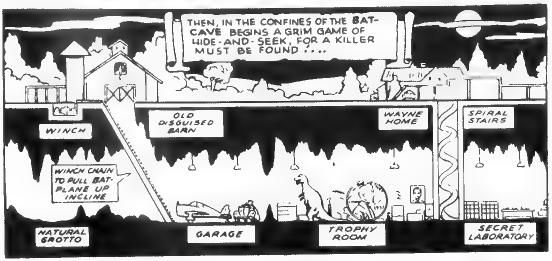
"Seen from the air," explained *Killer in Yellow*, "The Tepee would have been passed over by an ordinary flier at 200 feet as a deserted farmhouse. In reality, the ramshackle dwelling was a sort of watchtower. At the pressure of a hidden button the fireplace in the deserted dwelling was converted into the car of a modern elevator, which deposited its riders on the floor of The Tepee proper."

Below lay a vast semi-subterranean mansion, as *Murder in Paradise* reveals:

An immense cavern discovered by Jim Anthony years previously when deer-hunting, had inspired The Tepee. Originally this cavern had connected with the basement of a deserted farmhouse by a dirty, dangerous passageway, and legend had it that many a slave, fleeing from his masters below the Mason Dixon line prior to the Civil War, had used this cavern as a station on the underground railroad that led to Canada and Freedom.

Jim's first act had been to widen and make safer the passageway from cellar to cavern, to ventilate the place; shore it for security, and bring daylight into it with great hidden reflectors and cunningly concealed vents. Bit by bit the thing had grown beneath ground, and while construction men worked night and day on The Tepee proper, Jim had replanted thousands of shrubs and trees on the hundred acres about it, making a tangle of wildwood almost impossible to penetrate. The parachute landing net, the concealed tractor lanes, and the elevator in the




THEN, IN THE CONFINES OF THE BAT-CAVE BEGINS A GRIM GAME OF HIDE-AND-SEEK, FOR A KILLER MUST BE FOUND ....
WINCH
OLD DISGUISED BARN
WAYNE HOME
SPIRAL STAIRS
WINCH CHAIN TO PULL BAT-PLANE UP INCLINE
NATURAL GROTTO
GARAGE
TROPHY ROOM
SECRET LABORATORY

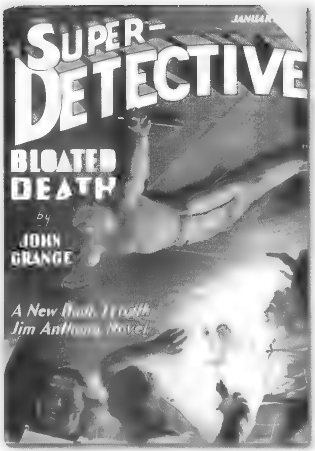
deserted farmhouse were all of Jim's handicraft and design.

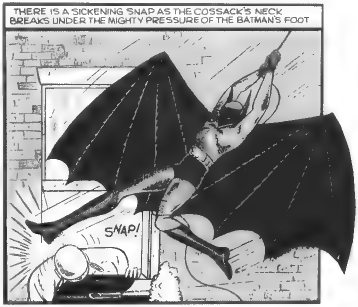
Bill Finger claimed the original Bat Cave diagram was inspired by something he found in *Popular Mechanics*. Could be. But if so, he wasn't the only one to lift the idea.

But we can't rule out another influence. *Super-Detective* was owned by DC president Harry Donenfeld! It shared the identical red-and-yellow typographic cover logo as *Superman*. Could be this was a case of cross-company influence.

As the Jim Anthony series progressed, he began operating more and more like a super-hero. In the early issues, Anthony wore a business suit, often stripping down to yellow Indian-style trunks when going into action. After a while he dons an all-black skintight suit that enables him to move stealthily in darkness.

Author John Grange—another house name—described the outfit this way: "He was Superman and The Shadow and





man suit" or "bat suit."

In one story, Anthony dons a black mask made of parachute silk to complete the resemblance to a human bat.

It sounds like a direct steal from Batman, but it's not.

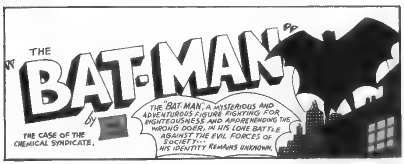
It's actually an adaptation of the leather "batman" rigs worn by daredevil parachutists during the barnstorming days of the '20s and '30s. These guys used to jump out of airplanes wearing leather batsuits with ribbed winglike extensions between arms and legs, glide down like human bats during air shows, cracking their chutes at the last possible second.

Could it be that one of the chief inspirations for Batman comes, after all, from a long-forgotten aerial act?

The roots of the Batman run deeper than we dream

Flash Gordon and the Blue Beetle, all rolled into one, for the thin black material was in reality a suit of tights, close fitting, which even covered his face."

But the most interesting wrinkle occurred when Anthony starts wearing his "batman" rig in 1941. This consists of a set of great black batlike glider wings which he uses to swoop down on his foes. The author calls it a "bat-


THE
BAT-MAN
By
THE CASE OF THE CHEMICAL SYNDICATE.
THE "BAT-MAN," A MYSTERIOUS AND ADVENTUROUS FIGURE FIGHTING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS AND AMONG THE UNDERWORLD FOES, IN HIS LONE BATTLE AGAINST THE EVIL FORCES OF SOCIETY... HIS IDENTITY REMAINS UNKNOWN!

[continued from page 32]

was really working on a comic strip. Oh, a couple others were trying, but basically I was the really fanatical one along those lines. Some of them wanted to be painters, some illustrators. There was a girl there that I liked very much—I eventually married her sister—but she did some fashion drawings, animal paintings, portrait work. It was a room full of very talented people.

Walter J. Wilwerding, who was a great animal painter in his day—did covers for *Sports Afield* and magazines like that; I have some of his paintings here in my studio—was in charge of the room and he was very liberal in the way he ran the room. It was a wonderful place to work. It was not unlike working in a newspaper office—where cartoonists could no longer get a chance to get their start. But it helped me a lot because these were cultured people, too. Of course, I was not very well educated. I'd only gone to high school. Several of us were returned World War II veterans—but these were people that talked about good literature and good painting and all of those things. It was a great place for me to grow up after World War II.

Dorf: Was it a 9:00 to 5:00 situation?
Schulz: Oh, yes. (Laughter)

Dorf: So that sort of established your work patterns. I mean, I understand you still follow that work pattern.

Schulz: I think my work pattern, Shel, has been designed more by family life than anything else. After I got married, the children came along quite rapidly…

Dorf: How many?

Schulz: We had five children eventually—and I just discovered that my place was to be with the kids; and so I always enjoyed getting up in the morning and taking them to school, or if they took the bus then down to the bus stop, and picking them up after school. That was the joy of my life! And if the two boys and some of their friends would come up to my studio at 3:00 in the afternoon and say, "C'mon, Dad, let's go play ball," I was always ready to go play ball. I liked doing that sort of thing. And even during the day, during the summer, they would say, "C'mon, Dad. We got a few kids over and we need a permanent pitcher." So I'd drop everything and go out and play ball with them because that was more important than drawing cartoons!

Dorf: Would you say they're better people because of your good fathering?

Schulz: I don't know. (Laughter) I don't take credit for that. I've always thought that I was a good father, but what we think of ourselves is probably not always the answer. I was never a very critical father.

Dorf: You left the discipline to your wife?

Schulz: I don't think there was that much discipline necessarily—a very good group of kids.

Dorf: Sports has always been an active part of your life, hasn't it? So many cartoonists get very heavy just from all of the hours spent sitting down at the board, not to mention everything else that's a part of the trade. You've kept your figure nicely through the years. How do you do it?

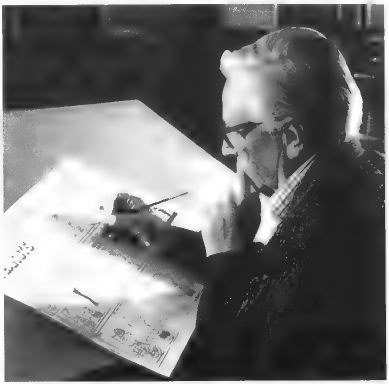
Schulz: I dunno. When I'm at my most active I play golf, tennis and hockey throughout the week. I play hockey every Tuesday night, and usually take part in a nighttime tennis league once a week, and I've been trying to play golf a couple of times a week lately.

Dorf: Have you always done this?

Schulz: I played on the high school golf team. I took up golf when I was 15 as a way of combating other sports where there was a coach who said you weren't good enough to play and had you sit on the bench. In my day you could play in any golf tournament you wanted as long as you just entered it. There was nobody to say you weren't good enough. So I actually played in the St. Paul Open a couple of times where Sam Snead was playing, and Ben Hogan and all of the big stars. All I did was give them my entry fee and I played.

Dorf: That's great. Did you learn something from those guys?

Schulz: Yeah, I learned a lot watching. I used to follow Sam Snead around and watch every shot that he made. He was my hero. Somebody asked me once, a high school student wrote and said, "We're writing to people to find out who their three heroes are. Who are yours?" I said Sam Snead, Billy Jean King and General Eisenhower. I always wondered what the teacher thought of that group of characters. (Laughter)



Dorf: Sparky, let's go back to when you first connected with *Little Folks*—was this syndicated just in the paper in that town or did you have national distribution?

Schulz: The editor said, "Why don't you draw this and bring it in once a week for the Sunday paper? We'll run it in the women's section in black and white." They started off running it three columns and after a few weeks they dropped it to two columns, so right away I got used to shrinkage. He said, "If you have them in here by Wednesday of each week that will be fine, and we'll just go from week to week, and we'll give you $10 for each page." That was my first regular cartoon outlet, which I did for about two years.

Dorf: Two years?

Schulz: Yeah, and it was wonderful training for me because it taught me to work on a regular schedule. It taught me to develop characters and ideas, and taught me how to get things done on time.

Dorf: Well, wait a minute. You know, it amazes me that you've done two years of *Little Folks*. This is enough to make a book! Hasn't anybody ever done a book of them?

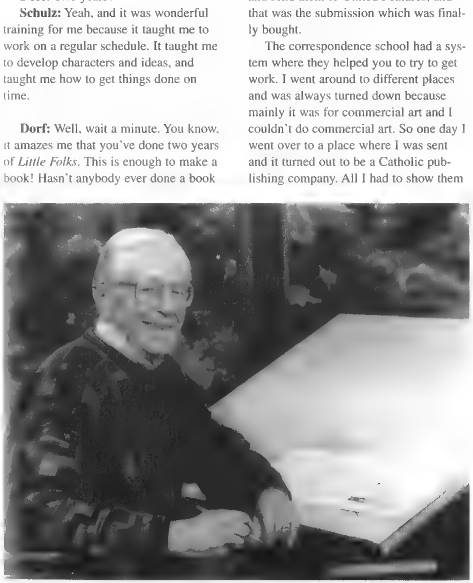
Schulz: I wouldn't let them because the style is just too different from what I draw now. I still have the whole collection. I pasted them all in a book.

Dorf: And you feel they're your "children" and you don't wanna…

Schulz: Oh, I never like anything that I did yesterday. (Laughter) Some of them are pretty good. I look at them and they were all right, but it was a growing process. Now, if you were to look at them you might regard them as rather immature, but they were all right for what they were. How I made my first submission to United Features was to take all of the best ones of these *Little Folks* that I had done and redraw them and send them to United Features, and that was the submission which was finally bought.

The correspondence school had a system where they helped you to try to get work. I went around to different places and was always turned down because mainly it was for commercial art and I couldn't do commercial art. So one day I went over to a place where I was sent and it turned out to be a Catholic publishing company. All I had to show them was some comic strips and I was all set to be turned down again and say, "Well, okay. I knew I couldn't do this. All I wanna do is draw comic strips." Lo and behold a fellow looked at it, his name was Roman Balte, and he says, "I think maybe I've got something." He gave me what was really my first cartoon job. He gave me the job of lettering the stories that the other people in the studio were doing.

I could letter very fast. I eventually would letter the entire comic magazine in English, French and in Spanish—and at one time I think I even lettered it in Latin, I'm not sure. And for this he gave me $1.50 an hour—I was just to submit my time—and I was always very efficient. I learned very early that editors want people working for them who get things done well but get them done on time and are reliable. He would call me up during the day when I was working at Art Instruction. "Sparky, I've got some things here and I sure would like to have them by tomorrow morning." So I would drive from Minneapolis all the way to downtown St. Paul—sometimes taking the streetcar if I didn't have my dad's car—pick up what he wanted, which he left outside the door, and then go over to Art Instruction for the day. Now, this to me was not a hardship. This, to me, was working. I enjoyed it thoroughly, and I could letter very fast. I got so that I could letter without even penciling in or using guidelines.



Dorf: That's why you don't need a letterer?

Schulz: That's why I never needed a lettering man. Now my lettering is kind of shaky because I am now 63 years old, but that was very important to me. One day I had done a special fast job for him and as a reward he let me draw a four-page story, which had something to do with some soldiers or something, and then he actually let me do two pages of humor cartoons and some of them were little kids. After they printed two of them, for which I think I got $20 a page, he then said that the priest who was running the outfit didn't care for those, so that was the end of that.

Dorf: After you connected with *Peanuts* were you able to work at home?

Schulz: I tried working at home when we moved to Colorado Springs, right after I signed the contract, and I discovered that working at home for me was absolutely impossible. My mother-in-law visited us for awhile and she suggested it might be better if I would just rent a small room someplace downtown in Colorado Springs, which is what I did; and since then I have always worked away from home. Even when we moved out here to California—we had a large place, 28 acres—I still never worked in the house. I don't know about others, but I just have decided that a man has to get up in the morning and go someplace. I think you have to go to a definite place where you do your work; and now Jeannie and I live alone in a very nice house about 20 minutes from here, and although I have a nice studio there I almost never use it. I find that I have to come to where I am sittng right now if I'm going to think of anything funny. I have to work in a pattern, which is why I work from 9:00 to…it used to be 9:00 to 5:00, lately it's been from 9:00 till 3:50. (Laughter)

Dorf: Then you work rather isolated and you always have, right?

Schulz: I don't know what you mean by…

Dorf: A cartoonist works almost totally alone.

Schulz: Oh, yeah.

Dorf: Was there somebody that you would bounce ideas off of…

Schulz: Never.

Photos on these two pages by Shel Dorf

Dorf: …and get a reaction, or do you just trust yourself, your own reaction?

Schulz: I've discovered something which I've never heard anyone else talk about which is that every now and then—and I couldn't tell you whether it's a matter of a few months or what it is—you hit slumps where you are no longer able to judge your work. I have often wanted to make a collection of comic strips where it was quite evident to me that the cartoonist had drawn something which was not only what we would call "not funny" but was simply not a gag at all but he wasn't aware of it. He had hit this point in his work schedule where he no longer was able to judge what he had done, whether or not it was funny. These are the little times that you have to beware of because it will happen to you and you don't know it. You look at something and you have no idea if it's funny

or not. I just discard it then because I'm very fussy about what I put in. Within the last couple of years I've probably discarded more ideas than I had in previous years. But I never test ideas on anyone else. In the first place, I don't think you can trust people because they want to be polite, and I don't want to…It's my business! I draw 'em and send 'em in!

Dorf: When *Peanuts* first started it was used as a filler in a lot of papers. Wasn't that because the syndicate sort of had this request…there were a lot of page layouts where they needed some kind of filler and it was done so that the four panels could be stacked on each other or dropped in as a square or as a little strip—and this is the way it started? I've heard you speak about this before.

Schulz: Yes. It was sold initially, and advertised and promoted, as a space-saving strip because of the way you described it. It could be run vertically and just take up one column; two squares beneath the other two made up a two-column feature.

I've really had a bitterness about this down through the years, because I really think if the people who were in charge at that time were to admit it, it was because they didn't have that much confidence in it. They told me all of the time that, well, you know—"There's a newspaper shortage and we have to do something to help get a feature into a paper because editors are not willing to take on new features." But then why, about a year later it seemed—maybe a couple of years later, I'm not quite sure—why did they give *Long Sam* to Al Capp and Bob Lubbers with huge panels? Why did they give the same amount of space to *Twin Earths*...I defy the man on the street to remember them. *Long Sam* was all right, but *Twin Earths* was a disaster. It was created, I think, by a committee. So this business of needing the space and everything is ridiculous, but I was stuck with it; and now when I hear cartoonists complaining about not having enough space—I've been drawing in the space of four airmail stamps for years!

Dorf: Was your style influenced by that?

Schulz: Oh, yeah, definitely. You see, my style was created partially from drawing for magazines like *The Saturday Evening Post*—I think cartoonists like Mort Walker and myself grew out of magazine cartooning, Dick Cavalli and all of the others—but I don't think that I would ever have drawn in the style that I'm drawing now if I had been given more space, but who knows, I don't know.

Dorf: Well, let's talk for a minute about some of your favorites in the magazine gag cartooning area.

Schulz: I suppose George Price would tower above most of them.

Dorf: Why?

Schulz: Because of the beautiful drawing. I don't know how *The New Yorker* works with its humor—I don't know if these cartoonists think of their own ideas, I wouldn't have the slightest idea; I have heard that certain ideas are farmed out to certain cartoonists who seem to be able to do them better, but I don't know anything about it—but down through the years I think George Price would tower way up among all of the great ones. And then there is Eldon Dedini, of course, who still draws so beautifully; and now—what's his name? George Wolfe, he's come along and

San Diego cartoonist Tom Reese gets some advice from the master in Schulz' Santa Rosa studio.

Photo by Shel Dorf

"Sparky" and his wife Jeannie at the 1993 Scottsdale, AZ, Reuben awards.

introduced his own brand.

Dorf: How about Gary Larson?

Schulz: Oh, Gary Larson is wonderful. I think if he had been born and started drawing 30 or 40 years before, then he would have been drawing for those magazines. He's fortunate that he was able to skip magazine cartooning and go right into syndication. No, he's wonderful. I can't believe how funny he is day after day.

Dorf: Well then, Price's line is one of the things that you admire.

Schulz: Oh, yeah. The drawing is beautiful.

Dorf: There's a real knowledge of structure, of good drawing, isn't there?

Schulz: Everything is drawn perfectly, whether it's a toaster or a chair or a dog or whatever. Every line is just right.

Dorf: Do you remember a cartoonist named Sam Cobean?

Schulz: Very well. He was one of the great ones. Cobean had a lot of imitators, as all of the good ones eventually do.

Dorf: Fontaine Fox?

Schulz: Fontaine Fox…. He could draw beautifully. Yeah. And McBride, who drew *Napoleon*, a marvelous pen-line. Yeah. Beautiful things. There are very few good pen techniques left anymore, but how can you develop a pen technique when you've only got an inch-and-a-half in the newspaper?

Dorf: Now, let us segue from that—this is a very natural segue—into some of the really amateur stuff that's being published today. I don't know, should we mention names?

Schulz: No, I won't. I don't want to talk 'em up.

Dorf: But you and I both know who we're talking about, and we'll describe it as the "high school yearbook school of drawing," or maybe even the "grade school yearbook school of drawing." Do you have opinions about this stuff?

Schulz: Oh, yes, very strong opinions. It's a pity that some of these people never really had a chance to polish their craft before they got going.

Dorf: But they're a success. They're in all of the papers. They're read every day.

Schulz: Is that success? (Laughter) That's not success. Success is drawing something that makes people laugh; but there's a difference in draftsmanship, which is what makes cartooning so wonderful. I suppose. You go back to J. R.

Williams' *Out Our Way*—he wasn't a great draftsman but his drawing is what I like to call effective, which is what Frank King was for *Gasoline Alley*. His drawing was effective. E. C. Segar's Popeye—was "Popeye" a well-drawn strip? James Thurber couldn't draw at all.

Dorf: Well, how about editors' tastes? Is this current crop of young editors more interested in the writing part than the art part?

Schulz: I think what they're interested in, probably, is not making a mistake. They're so afraid that they're going to miss something that is going to be a success that they all just grab onto these things. There seems to be no real proving ground for somebody to develop a good feature. There's no room for that. Now they're breaking down syndicate territorial rights and everybody seems to have the right to buy everything. The competition in newspapers is gone. We're down to a one-newspaper town, so an editor doesn't buy a feature to promote his newspaper over the competition. So all of these things have entered into it.

Dorf: What about the first time you really felt that you were a success? Now here, my God, you had a wife, five children—that's a great financial responsibility. Did your wife work? Did you come from a rich family? (Schulz laughs.) Most cartoonists don't make much money. How did you survive in the early days?

Schulz: Well, I didn't get married until I sold the *Peanuts* strip. When I was working at Art Instruction I was making $65 a week, at the end, and doing a little freelance work, so all-in-all I probably did not make as much as $100 a week—but after all what did I need money for? I just lived with my dad. It was just he and I, and my wants have always been relatively small. I just wanted to draw something that was decent. It was never drawn for money. Money was never a problem. I always thought I was making a lot of money, even though maybe I wasn't. I didn't know the difference. I had all that I wanted.

Dorf: I can identify with that.

Schulz: Sure. *Peanuts* was not an instant success. I labored along for a long while with only 45 papers. We started off with seven. I didn't think that I would ever get to 100. I remember reading about Walt Kelly's *Pogo* when he made such a big hit with his first reprint book which came out in that small size and cost $1, and *Time* magazine said that he had 80 newspapers. I thought, "80 newspapers! How did he ever get 80 newspapers?" And I used to read about Nancy and Sluggo being in 400 newspapers, and *Li'l Abner*, and I thought, "400! That's unbelievable!"

I think a combination of several things got us going. One of them was the cover on *Time* magazine. I don't think I had 100 papers when *Time* magazine put us on the cover. And then, of course, everything began to happen. Snoopy got up on his hind legs and began to walk around and he began to think thoughts which could be read, which I hadn't done initially. And then I did the whole pursuit of the Red Baron business, and then Lee Mendelson came along with the television shows, and—interestingly enough—none of these things was ever wanted when they first began.

Dorf: Didn't that discourage you?

Schulz: No-no-no. Nothing ever discourages me. (Laughter)

Dorf: How come?

Schulz: Why should I be discouraged? I was doing what I wanted to do. I've never been discouraged by any of those things.

Dorf: How do you "bank" your creative powers?

Schulz: I have found that working in the same room is the only guarantee of keeping going somehow, a change of scenery makes working more difficult, but sitting down in the same place each day turns on the creativity. I have also discovered, however, that I get a lot of good ideas while driving along in the car, and I can almost be certain that I will think of at least one good idea if I am at a symphony or a ball game or a hockey game or something of this kind.

Dorf: How have you protected yourself from the effects of too much wealth?

Schulz: Well, an incident happened a few years ago when my daughters used to skate over at the arena which is a block-and-a-half from here. They would come over every day and stop by to say hello and visit and all that, and Amy came in one day and she was looking down at the strips and she said, "How far are you ahead now?" I said, "Well, I think these are about maybe two or three months ahead." And she said, "Dad, you're obsessed." (Laughter) I can't explain it in any other way than that. I think I am more obsessed than some of my competitors. And I don't think drawing a comic strip is the greatest thing in the world.

Dorf: And you don't care about the grown-up toys that money can buy?

Schulz: No-no-no-no-no. That isn't part of it. I like to drive a Mercedes because they are reliable and I don't think it's gonna break down before I get home. That's the only reason I drive a Mercedes. I do remember that during the War and after I wanted to have a nice set of golf clubs because my initial set that I played with when I was on the high school golf team was a mixed set. None of the clubs ever cost more than, I think, $3 apiece. We could never buy new golf balls. The golf balls we played with were ones that we'd found. And so my ambition was to make enough money so that I could buy a nice set of golf clubs.

Dorf: The popular image of *Peanuts* has changed through the years: First, it was a clear portrayal of a child's trials and tribulations, which everyone could identify with; then we looked further, and it became an exercise in human nature—with emphasis on frustration; then it became fantasy and Americana with a tender philosophy on how to recognize the good things in life and cope with the failures. Each time a new direction was introduced, we were able to relate to it in our own life experience. For a gag-a-day comic strip, this is

unique, because we who are longtime readers have the same familiarity with the characters one has with continuity strips. It becomes clear that you yourself are your toughest critic, because you are able to constantly introduce elements in the strip that haven't been done before. Is public reaction a tempering factor in your writing?

Schulz: Public reaction is difficult to follow when you are drawing a comic strip because the strips are drawn so far in advance, but I must admit that if certain episodes or characters seem well-received that I am always willing to carry them on. Basically, however, I draw what I think is funny and never attempt to please everyone each day.

Dorf: Why are you the champion of the underachiever?

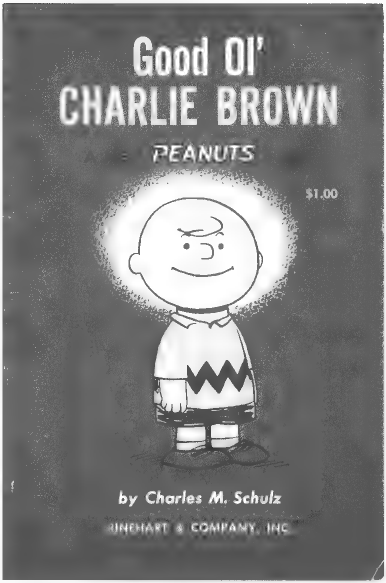
Schulz: Who knows? Maybe it's because I was such an underachiever myself.

Dorf: Do you achieve something with your television and movie audience that you don't with the newspaper audience? How does the mail differ?

Schulz: I think that our mail has increased, especially among children, with the production of television shows. They are so close, however, to the strip in their content that the mail does not differ that much.

Dorf: I have heard criticism that your characters have been damaged by over-exposure through the commercial market. How do you react to this?

Schulz: I would like to know first who the critics are who say that my characters have been damaged in order that my answer be accurate. Perhaps there is some jealousy here. My strip is better today than it ever has been, and no one is forced to buy the books or the sweatshirts, or watch the television shows, or anything else. This is a strong criticism, and one about which I could talk for hours. I imagine that if someone had really liked the *Peanuts* comic strip, they could be offended by seeing the characters used in so many different ways, but that is just one of the things that a reader has to put up with. Athletes get paid for doing commercials, as do actors and other types. I am never written up in the art section of magazines, and my work does not hang in galleries. I am not a pure artist. I am a comic strip artist, and the purpose of my work is to help the editor sell his newspaper. How can a commercial enterprise grow commercial?



Dorf: Can you recall a few commercial propositions you rejected? And tell us why?

Schulz: Offhand, I cannot recall commercial propositions that we have rejected, but we have certainly done this. I defy any one to tell me of a cartoonist who has worked harder to maintain a high standard in the licensing of his characters than I have. I have certainly not always been successful, but I have tried.

Dorf: If you had time to attend some college classes, which ones would you select?

Schulz: I attended a night class on the novel and enjoyed it thoroughly. I got an A on my term paper and an A in the class. It was one of the great thrills of my life. I don't think I will ever go back to college because it might destroy my A average.

Dorf: Why do you enjoy your encounters with college students?

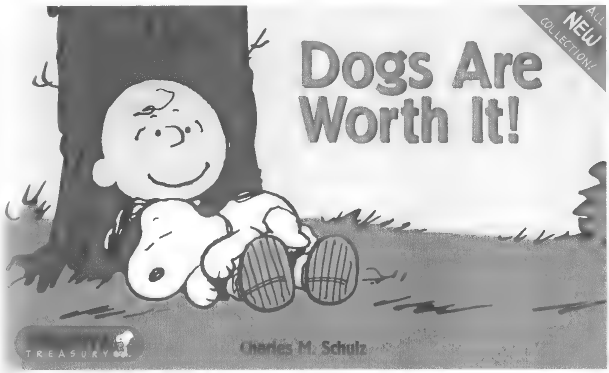
Schulz: College students seem to represent, basically, the cross-section of my readership, and I always enjoy hearing their opinions.

Dorf: Sparky, we haven't talked at all about the actual mechanics of you drawing the strips. Could you just run through how that's done?

Schulz: Well, I use different types of scratchpads on which I doodle to create the ideas. Right now I've got several pads, the kind that attorneys have, those yellow pads, and I just sit—say on a Monday morning where I have no ideas

at all and I'm starting a brand new week—the first thing that I do is look at the calendar to see when the strips are coming out in case I'm running into a holiday or something. Then I just sit there and I start doodling, trying to think of something funny, hoping that it will be a funny picture because I think that a lot of us forget that cartooning is still drawing funny pictures. It's not always dialogue. If I can come up with a funny picture then that's great, and I reach over to the left and I have the strips with the panels already printed on and I will pencil in the idea and rough in the dialogue in pencil and maybe letter it out. I don't finish up the strip because I know how long it will take me to complete the strip, so I set it aside on the desk and then I try to think of another idea. If I think of another idea I do the same thing. If it's going to be a good day then I'll get three or four ideas and I'll letter them all in and maybe make a drawing here or a drawing there, and I might finish them up that day and I might not. I might wait until the next day hoping that I will think of a couple more ideas and finish up the week. If I can do six ideas in two days then I'm very happy. Then the next day I will try to do a Sunday page, which means then on Thursday I can start the dailies again. As Milton Caniff says, "I'm always trying to lap myself. That's the idea. If it takes more than three days to do a batch of dailies then it's been too hard—the ideas haven't come up that easily.

But I don't worry about it. People always used to ask me about what they call writer's block. I say writer's block is for amateurs. Cartoonists are like professional actors. The curtain goes up and you step out on the stage and you do it. A cartoonist knows that the paper comes out every day, and so you do it.



Dorf: Describe a good day in the life of Charlie Brown.

Schulz: It can't be done.

Dorf: Would it spoil things if he really had one area of achievement? I for one am ready for it!

Schulz: Yes, the whole structure would begin to collapse.

Dorf: Could you elaborate on that?

Schulz: Well, I think you establish a premise in whatever you are doing and you must never destroy that premise. Charlie Brown cannot win to any great extent. I suppose there could be a very brief incident of some kind and you could return to it but probably the biggest mistake ever made in comic-strip history was Li'l Abner's marriage. The premise of the strip collapsed. He tried to return to it with the brother, which didn't work because the brother never had the appeal of Li'l Abner, and *Li'l Abner* was one of the great comic strips of all time.

There's not much room in comic strips for drastic change. All you can do is try to improve a little bit each day, or try some new directions now and then, if you can then maybe introduce a new character—but not on purpose. I think new characters should come because of some idea that you have had—which prompts something which I don't think anybody has ever brought up before. I was talking to George Pipal, who works here in my studio as a representative of United Features, and I said one thing which I've never heard told people who want to be cartoonists, which is that you really shouldn't start with a comic strip by thinking of the characters first. You should start trying to think of some funny ideas. Out of those funny ideas the characters will inevitably come. But most people don't want to do that. Most people want to draw 15 comic strips and send them to the syndicate and become rich and famous. I say draw 100 comic strips and throw 'em all away and start over again.

Dorf: Are there any dimensions in your characters that you're still discovering after 35 years?

Schulz: I think their personalities

gradually change without your being aware of it. The personality of one character is sometimes taken over by another character. The most obvious example would probably be Charlie Brown and Linus. I think Charlie Brown initially was a lot like Linus is now. Charlie Brown, when the strip first started out, was not supposed to be the loser.

Dorf: I saw somebody on the plane this morning actually open the paper and read *Peanuts*, which is at the top of the page. That's the moment that this whole thing is built around, that one moment where somebody just reads it, scans it, smiles or whatever, and it's over. It's so brief.

Schulz: I know. (Laughter)

Dorf: I was first aware of *Peanuts* as something to reread a second and third time and enjoy it over and over again when the books started coming out. Can you sort of date the rise in popularity of the strips with the reprint books?

Schulz: Oh. I doubt it.

Dorf: Because you were so subtle and so gentle, you sort of snuck up on us. This little three seconds that we had with you every day was a little amusing, gentle, or even cruel. To be with that world for just three seconds wasn't quite enough. To have a whole book and sit down in a chair and make the visit with the *Peanuts* characters longer, to me that heightened the whole enjoyment of the strip.

Schulz: Well, it's interesting, because there were book critics who said the strip is drawn to be enjoyed on a daily basis and not in one big form like a book, so no matter what you do somebody criticizes it.

Dorf: Are there any problems in translating your humor into another language?

Schulz: Translation? I wouldn't have the slightest idea. I don't pay any attention to it because I think it's a problem which is beyond worrying. How can I decide whether or not someone in Japan is going to understand the strip and someone in Sweden might not? It's totally beyond me. I simply draw what I think is funny and if they like it great, if they understand it fine, if they don't, well maybe they shouldn't try to reproduce the strip in that country.

Dorf: Have you ever been canceled in a country because of the language barrier?

Schulz: No, that's been no problem at all. I think that England has run the strips about a year late for some strange reason I've never been able to find out. For a while I thought it might be because they were dropping a lot of the baseball strips which they didn't understand, but that's nonsense because the baseball strips are not drawn to relate only to people who understand baseball. They really don't have much to do with it.

Dorf: You've got a new character called Tapioca Pudding, and I have a hunch there is a message there against merchandising, and if we think carefully you are the most successful merchandiser of a cartoon character that ever was—so how can you attack something that you, yourself, were responsible for?

Schulz: Because I'm attacking where it began. I never started out in merchandising. I started out drawing a good comic strip, and I created a group of good characters, and as the years progressed people came to us one by one—we never sought them out, we never sought out one single license. Everything came to us, from television to books to licensed products. It was always somebody who had an idea and came to us.

Nowadays the characters are created in a cold-blooded fashion by committee, and the comic strips and the action of the characters comes later. Well, usually there is no later because the characters die off after a couple of years because they have no life. You can't tell anything that Strawberry Shortcake or any of those characters have ever said. They are cold-blooded creations which have no real life. You see?

My licensing has been criticized down the years mainly, I think, through jealousy. I have heard cartoonists say that they would never have gotten

involved in it. Well, they didn't get involved in it because they couldn't draw characters that were worthwhile to license. Even—well, forget it. I was about to mention a name, but I won't mention his name. You see, what is wrong with a plush Snoopy? What is wrong with having books with reprint cartoons in them? What is wrong with having Snoopy on the side of a lunchbox? Nothing is wrong with it until we get to the point where Charles Schulz got so big he hired 30 people to do his work for him while he was involved in licensing and went around the country making speeches. But Charles Schulz stayed home and drew the comic strip every day, thought of every idea, wrote every comic strip, and has never cheated the editor out of his initial agreement, which was to buy a comic strip which was the best thing that I can draw. So, you don't have to buy the books. You don't have to buy the lunchboxes or the sweatshirts or anything like that. They are just there.

I am a contradiction. Nobody watches their merchandising more closely than I do, and yet on the other hand pays less attention to it than I do. I draw the comic strip. I draw the daily strip and the Sunday page.

Dorf: Did your children grow up with stuffed Snoopys?

Schulz: Oh, yeah. The kids liked all of the things, which was very gratifying; and they all had my original strips pinned to their walls and they had their favorites and they would ask me for originals for their friends, and this was always very gratifying.

Dorf: Did they look at their father as a humorist?

Schulz: No. They didn't know what I was doing. (Laugher) They really admit now that it took them until their middle-teens before they even realized that there was any fame involved at all.

Dorf: You must have loved this because of the type of person you are—you just wanted them to accept you as Dad and not be kind of messed up as the children of a famous person?

Schulz: I never paid any attention to it. I don't think of myself as being famous. I don't think about those things. I don't think about being famous and successful.

Dorf: Well now, Sparky, they don't ask just anybody to be the Grand Marshall of the Rose Parade and end up using your characters in outer space and things like that.

Schulz: Yeah, I know.

Dorf: How did you feel when your characters went into outer space?

Schulz: Oh, that was great. I think that's one of the best things that's ever happened. Snoopy was the first character in comic strip history literally to land on the moon! It wasn't just a story! No, he was there! And they brought back all sorts of beautiful little lapel pins which were given as safety awards to people on the assembly line. It was a wonderful thing, very flattering.

Dorf: Hasn't this touched you?

Schulz: Oh, yeah. Some of the things have been wonderfully gratifying. But you can't let it be something that you think about all of the time because you still have to do your work. I think one of the most gratifying things that ever happened was the musical *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown*. I used to go down to the Little Fox Theater in San Francisco now and then and watch the performances and just stand out in the lobby when the people came out afterwards, and seeing families coming through the doors all smiling, knowing that they had seen something which was really fun and clean and decent and entertaining. That was really gratifying.

Dorf: Did you write that?

Schulz: No, I didn't. I didn't have anything to do with it. They just took it from my books. I didn't even see the show for a year. It ran in New York for over a year and I had never even seen it.

Dorf: But you approved the script?

Schulz: Never saw it. (Laughter)

Dorf: Who wrote that terrible contract for you?

Schulz: Jim Hennessy, and talk about

a terrible contract. it is a terrible contract.

Dorf: But it turned out to be a gold mine in terms of popularity. Local theatre groups and schools are reviving it all of the time. It's become a chestnut.

Schulz: It's the most performed musical in the history of the American theater.

Dorf: (Gasp!) Is that true? Can you really say that?

Schulz: No doubt about it.

Dorf: That's incredible! I thought it might have been *Oklahoma* or something like that!

Schulz: Well, people can't perform *Oklahoma*, you see. *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown* can be done by every grade school, high school, college or church. All they need are six kids and some blocks. That's all.

Dorf: That's true! (Laughter) That's an incredible statement. Wow! One thing we haven't touched on yet is all the public service work you've done. What has been the most fun for you?

Schulz: I'm always willing to be the honorary chairman of any disease that I might get. (Laughter) So I have been the Easter Seals chairman and the Kidney Foundation chairman and the Heart Association chairman and all of those things, and I see no reason why not to. It's a simple thing to cooperate with these organizations, so I try to do all that I can.

I make almost no personal appearances anymore. No more speeches and things like that. I'm no longer an entertainer. Now and then for the right cause I might go out, but as far as being an after-dinner speaker just to make some program chairman happy, I've found myself alone on the highway at midnight driving home many times too many now to do that anymore. So I'm not an entertainer anymore. I used to go out and give chalk talks and draw the characters and try to make people laugh, but that doesn't interest me anymore, so I just don't do it.

I remember my first autograph party, when the first book collection of *Peanuts* came out: I was sitting at a table in Minneapolis and very few people were coming by and I was trying to keep busy by autographing books and setting them in a stack in case somebody came by to purchase one, and some were sitting on a counter next to me and two ladies came by. They were looking at different books. One of the ladies picked up the little *Peanuts* reprint book, just took a brief glance at it, did not even bother to place it back on the stack but just kind of dropped it almost disdainfully on the table, and I sat there thinking, "Why do I have to put up with this?" (Laughter) So I don't do autograph parties anymore.

Dorf: What do you want for your future? More of the same? We're getting into an age where cartoons are being cre-

ated by computer. How do you feel about that?

Schulz: I don't know anything about that. (Pause) I was getting to the point last year sometime when I was thinking of quitting. I think about it quite often. Since my heart surgery my hands have never quite calmed down.

Dorf: What does that mean?

Schulz: They shake. It makes drawing very difficult. I can't draw as fast as I used to be able to. I'm not as facile. I used to have a great penline, you know. I had a penline which I would match to Percy Crosby's anytime, but that was a long time ago.

Dorf: So? Katherine Hepburn's voice quavers but she's still acting and we accept her and treasure her.

Schulz: Well, I still draw, so I've changed my mind. I haven't thought about quitting lately. We still have book projects to do. I'm still always interested in doing some new books. I think the book I came out with last Christmas, *You Don't Look 35, Charlie Brown*, was a book unlike any that any other cartoonist had ever done. I think *Peanuts Jubilee* for our 25th anniversary was one of the most beautiful comic strip books ever published, at least in this country. You know, Europe does much more beautiful books than we do over here. And then there's still television. I'm involved with a television project now, which is going to be my *Citizen Kane*, I hope, if it all works out.

Dorf: That's saying a lot.

Schulz: Yeah. And I think the television project which we did three years ago, *What Have We Learned, Charlie Brown?*, was something none of the other cartoon characters on television ever could have done, because they just don't have the right characters, and fortunately we do. Linus and Charlie Brown and Snoopy can do things that these other characters can't do. So those are the projects which interest me and keep me going.

Dorf: Which award of the many you've received means the most to you? Which award has pleased your parents the most?

Schulz: I suppose receiving the two Reubens pleased me more than anything else, but I think having Snoopy go to the moon was the greatest triumph of all. This is because cartoonists have been sending their characters into space for years in their stories, but mine was the first character who really went to the moon. Snoopy lapel pins were carried by the astronauts into space.

Dorf: Who would you like to interview, and why?

Schulz: I would like to interview Fred Glover, who is the coach of the California Seals hockey team, and try to find out how a man who was such an intense player himself can stand coaching a team that continually takes such a beating.

Dorf: How can we be nicer to one another?

Schulz: Probably simply by listening. I have the feeling that we don't listen hard enough to one another to make the effort to ask questions.

"Sparky" and Shel—a treasured 25 year friendship.

by Mike Wilbur

An Anniversary Update

Buck Rogers & Wilma Deering. Dark Horse Classic Comic Characters #s 39 & 40

Well, here we are. *CBM* **#100**. Seventy-nine issues as a **Gemstone** publication; 17 in its current incarnation.

My original inclination was to try and whip up some kind of glitzy super-spectacular presentation to help commemorate this auspicious occasion, but the realities of higher-priority projects here at Gemstone HQ, and the ever-present Sword-of-Damocles deadline crunch threw the proverbial monkey wrench into that idea.

So, we're left with Plan B.

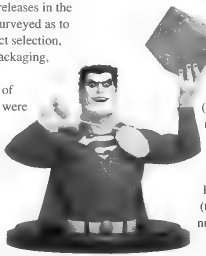
Since so many publications use the occasion of an anniversary issue to look back at their accomplishments and to look forward to the future, that seemed like a good theme for this issue's column. So, we'll take some brief updated visits to past subjects of this column, and take a look ahead to the possible future.

Back in **#86** (and an interview piece in **#90**), I reported on **Dark Horse Comics** and their line of **Classic Comic Character** statues. The line still rolls along, with release numbers 39 and 40, **Buck Rogers** and **Wilma Deering**, recently solicited for Spring '03 release.

In mid-November '02, Dark Horse solicited retailers, via Diamond Comic Distributors' email contact network, for input regarding future releases in the series. Retailers were surveyed as to their opinions on subject selection, frequency of release, packaging, and price point.

Classic Luthor Mini-Busts. From DC Direct.

Also in #86, statues of Golden Age characters were discussed, particularly those of **DC Comics** (since they seem to be doing almost all of the work in that era). **DC Direct** has continued the line of "classic" mini-busts, modeled on Golden Age renditions of the subjects. Released as of this writing are **Superman**, **Batman**, **Robin**, **Lex Luthor**, the **Joker**, **Bizarro** and Will Eisner's **The Spirit**.



Classic Bizarro Mini-Bust. From DC Direct.

Classic Batman Mini-Bust. From DC Direct.

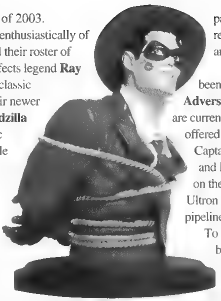
Randy Bowen and **Bowen Designs**, the focus of **#87**'s column, finished up his line of full-size **Marvel** character statues in Spring '02, and the last of his super-popular Marvel mini-busts shipped at the end of the year. Final release was an extra-limited variant version of Iceman from the X-Men.

Numbered as a mind-boggling #75, it was actually the 80th piece produced. This factors in multi-pack, unified-number sets of Venom (three busts collectively numbered #51), the Fantastic Four (three busts collectively numbered #63), and Phoenix of the X-Men (two busts collectively numbered #66).

Bowen's Marvel mini-statues, predominately (but not exclusively) reduced-scale versions of earlier full-size statues, are scheduled to run

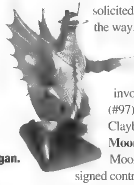
through the end of 2003.

In **#88**, I told enthusiastically of **X-Plus Toys** and their roster of movie special-effects legend **Ray Harryhausen**'s classic creatures and their newer statue line of **Godzilla** and his cinematic adversaries. While the Harryhausen line saw just one further release following my original report, the Godzilla juggernaut keeps rolling along. Most of the future releases projected in the original column have been released, as well as others such as the monster **Gigan**.



Classic The Spirit Mini-Bust. From DC Direct.

Back in issue #91, we looked at relative newcomer **Diamond Select Toys**, and their fledgling lines of licensed **Marvel Comics** pieces. At the time of that writing, only a handful of items had actually been released. An outline had been given for the planned product lines, but most were still in the development stage at that time. Most of the observations in that column were based on the viewing of prototypes and concept art. Now that nearly a year (and a substantial number of product releases) has passed since that original report was written, it's time for another visit.



Mothra and Gigan. Adversaries of Japanese film icon Godzilla

Several releases in what has been dubbed the **"Avengers and Adversaries"** line of medium statues are currently available. Such separately-offered pieces as the Red Skull & Captain America, Thor & Loki, and Iron Man & the Mandarin are on the shelves, with the Vision & Ultron being the next pairing in the pipeline.

To date, eleven Ultimate Marvel busts, nine Rogues Gallery busts, six Marvel Universe busts, and four of five Silver Age X-Men medium statues have been released (and the first couple of full-size statues have been solicited), with more on the way.

But, perhaps the biggest development involves our recent (#97) subject, Clayburn Moore of **Moore Creations**. Moore recently signed contracts to produce Marvel character pieces for BOTH **Diamond Select** and **Dynamic Forces**.

According to the press release posted on the Moore Creations website:

"…With Diamond Select Toys, a series of 10" statues will be sculpted including such female characters as Black Cat, White Queen, Rogue and She-Hulk…With Dynamic Forces, the agreement focuses on a series of resin bust sculptures of characters from the Marvel universe as well as diorama sculptures based on some of the most famous Marvel covers in comic history. The first piece to be completed is the Mary Jane Watson Bust. Standing at a full 8" in height, this great work of art reflects the first meeting between Peter Parker and Mary Jane Watson from *Spider-Man* #42…"

…ic Joker and Robin Mini-Busts. From DC Direct.

The Hulk. From Diamond Select

I'm currently polishing up the transcription of an interview I recently conducted with Clayburn Moore on the process of translating 2-D artwork into 3-D sculpture, for publication in an upcoming issue. After reading this, you'll no longer wonder why these statues "cost so much"; you'll be wondering why they cost so little!

So that's our little refresher trip down memory lane. In the future, you can expect columns on, among other topics, science fiction characters, animated DC Comics characters, the busts and statues of Dynamic Forces, and, for Halloween 2003, a look at what the statue world has to offer horror fans. "

Gambit of the X-Men. Last regular-series release of Bowen Designs' Marvel mini-busts

Beloved Disney Characters Grace Comic Book Pages for a New Generation

Publishers Announce a Revival of Disney Comic Books in the United States

Gemstone Publishing and Disney Publishing Worldwide plan to bring back a variety of comic books featuring many of the classic Disney characters. Mickey, Minnie, Donald, Goofy and other Disney favorites will be featured in a series of monthly comic books to be introduced by Gemstone in June 2003.

The comic books will include classic series such as *Uncle Scrooge Adventures*, *Donald Duck Adventures* and *Walt Disney Comics and Stories*. Gemstone Publishing will introduce two monthly comics starting in the Summer and will follow-up with two additional monthlies later in the year. The comics will be distributed to the comic book specialty market by Diamond Comic Distributors and to traditional book markets throughout the United States and Canada by Diamond Book Distributors.

"There's a legacy of Disney comics that can now be enjoyed by a whole new generation," said Deborah Dugan, president, Disney Publishing Worldwide. "We are pleased to be working with Gemstone to widen the reach of these timeless stories and to keep them alive for all readers to enjoy."

"With the support from Disney Publishing Worldwide, the old gang that has entertained the world for the past seventy-five years will soon return to their comic book roots," said Steve Geppi, Gemstone Publishing president and CEO. "This means that some of us older folks will get another opportunity to be enchanted by the distinctive artistry and humor of Disney comics."

Gemstone has already assembled a team of Disney comic veterans to preserve the quality of these classic comics. The new series of comic books will contain the recognized work of Disney artists William Van Horn, Don Rosa, Daan Jippes, Daniel Branca, Noel Van Horn, Patrick Block, Shelly Block and the legendary Carl Barks, as well as others.

Disney comic book fans can go to **www.gemstonepub.com/Disney** and register to receive e-mail news regarding special offers, subscriptions information and contests. Best known as the home of *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*, Gemstone Publishing was formed by Diamond Comic Distributors President and Chief Executive Officer Stephen A. Geppi as a conduit for his efforts in preserving and promoting the history of the comics medium. Gemstone publishes *The Overstreet Comic Book Grading Guide*, *The Big Big Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*, *Hake's Price Guide To Character Toys*, *The Overstreet Toy Ring Price Guide*, *The Overstreet Indian Arrowheads Identification and Price Guide*, and *Comic Book Marketplace*. Most recently, Gemstone added *Scoop*, a free, weekly informational e-mail newsletter, to its list of popular publications.

A subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company, (NYSE:DIS), Disney Publishing Worldwide, is the largest children's publisher in the world, with 274 children's magazines and 120 million children's books sold each year. DPW publishes books, magazines and continuity programs in 55 languages in 74 countries, reaching more than 100 million readers each month. Global headquarters are in New York City.

Walt Disney's Donald Duck Adventures – FCBD Edition

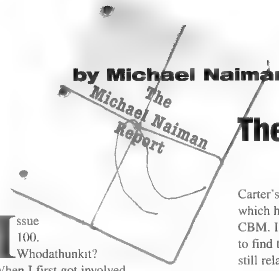
Gemstone Gets on Board for Free Comic Book Day

More than fifty years ago, *Boys and Girls March of Comics* released a shoe store giveaway comic book that featured Carl Barks' now-classic *Donald Duck* adventure, "Maharajah Donald." The people who acquired that free comic book didn't realize it at the time, but it was destined to become one of the most valuable and most highly sought-after collectibles in today's market.

And what better way for Gemstone Publishing to kick off its new line of Disney comic books than with "Maharajah Donald" as its offering for Free Comic Book Day. If you were to buy a mint copy of the original book now, it would cost you more than $7000, as listed in the latest edition of *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*, but this is your opportunity to own it for the original cover price: nothing!

Also included: the original two-page back-up story, "The Peaceful Hills" and the original *March of Comics* front cover, which is reprinted on the back cover of the Gemstone giveaway. Go to **www.freecomicbookday.com** for a complete listing of participating publishers.

by Michael Naiman



The Way We Were

Issue 100. Whodathunkit? When I first got involved with CBM, it was a true garage enterprise overseen on a 24/7 basis by Gary and Lisa Carter. Folding tables, a rickety, noisy dot matrix printer, all-hours runs to the printer and "state-of-the-art" Syquest disks. I learned how to use a Mac and did anything I could to help out. Being involved with the project was very exciting. My first article appeared in #8. It was so cool to see my name "in print." The unexpected pay for that article consisted of a box of magazines of which I gladly handed out to anyone who would read it (much less understand what I was babbling about!)! The mag was a crossroads of opinions—a meeting place for collectors to talk about collecting. What's Hot, What's Not. Comics on the Couch with Dr. Townsend. Dr. Keith's Rants and Raves. Newsprint pages. A fanzine with a feeling. Those were the days.

When Gary told me he had the opportunity to go back to Tennessee to work with Bob Overstreet as Editor-In-Chief of Overstreet Publications, I remember saying "Well, good luck, I'll miss you guys, but don't sell your house, nothing is forever!" "…so they packed up their bags and moved to Tennessee!" (hum to Beverly Hillbillies theme). That was December of 1992. CBM transmogrified into Overstreet's Comic Book Marketplace and took on a New Look in coverage, style and format. 21 issues later, that experiment ended. Twenty-one issues of Vol. #1 and 21 issues of OCBM (as I called it)—what's with the twenty-one issue jinx?

Between issue 21 and Vol. #3 #22 of Carter's CBM came the six quarterlies which had the taste and feel of the old CBM. I suggest to any CBM completist to find these issues if they can. They are still relatively cheap and contain a huge amount of data and info. My interview with Carl Barks appeared in Overstreet's Golden Age Quarterly #2 (Oct/Nov 1993). To this day, I hold that out as the highlight of my tenure with CBM.

The Carters returned to their home in sunny San Diego in November of 1994 and cranked out CBM #22 just in time for the grand opening of Geppi's Diamond Galleries. The promotional giveaway for the event had a slick white cover with gold print announcing the event.

It was a kick for me to get involved again on the local level. I had a stint as advertising manager at a time before the Internet began to erode the advertising dollars available for the print media. You wouldn't believe the ads that came into the office. From pencil scribbles to camera ready—it ran the gauntlet! I think that's when I developed most of my gray hair. When the time came to lay out the issue on the floor and place the ads—you knew the issue was coming together! And then it was time to start all over again. An incredible race every month—you couldn't help but feel like a hamster on a wheel! It was exhilarating and exhausting all at the same time. The last issue of CBM produced by Gary and Lisa was #83 dated January 2000.

August 2001 saw the re-start of CBM with Russ Cochran at the helm at his headquarters out of West Plains, Missouri. Hopefully, with issue #100 (or soon after) we'll have another index for issues number 75-100. Whaddaya say, Russ?

All Star Auction's recent sale of some of the Bill Howard squarebound, giant, and annual collection was just a taste of what is due in the near future. And these books were not the Best and Brightest of the bunch! I've seen them all, up close and personal. Hold on, the Best is yet to come! Some examples of those NM issues sold (with the commission added) include Davy Crockett #1 $571; Amazing Spider-Man Annual #2 $593; Batman Annual #4 $771; Silver Surfer #4 $1373; Thunder Agents #2 $336; Weird Science-Fantasy Annual #1 $12,189; Fantastic Four Annual #1 $1621; Secret Origins #1 $3393; Flash Annual #1 $840; Sgt. Fury Annual #1 $713; Strange Tales Annual #2 $1008; Incredible Hulk King Size Special #1 $229; 80 Page Giant #6 $448; Superman Annual #6 $448; Strange Terrors #6 VF $560.

Some of the artwork which sold (commission included): Charles Schulz Peanuts Sunday $16,800. Peanuts daily $8960; Hogarth hand-colored Sunday $10,411; Alex Ross Heroes art $7840; Foster Val Sunday $4466; Calkins Buck Rogers daily $4116. Some collectors have pointed out that this is the highest amount ever paid for a Calkins daily!

Golden Age Tear sheets: A unique and rare collection of Superman Sunday Comic clippings from the years 1939-1942 recently sold for $630. This collection of over 65 Sunday Comics contained the very first Superman Sunday Comic Feature (11/5/1939)! This collection includes a complete run of all 1939-1940 Sunday Comics 1-61. The collection includes Sunday clips from the Boston Sunday Globe, Chicago's Sunday Times, Philadelphia Inquirer, Seattle Times, Minneapolis Star Journal, San Francisco Chronicle, New York Sunday Mirror and the L.A. Times.

Overseas Supes: A bound book containing over 400 pages of 1938 through 1939 Triumph publications from England sold for $305. The volume contained the vintage first appearance of Superman, Mad Crews, Peter Farrell detective, Rusty Coles Flying Joker, Guns of the North West and the Crimson Dragon.

More Supes Stuff: A late '40s/early '50s Superman Premium Crusader Ring sold for $100. A Superman Card made by Leader in 1940 sold for $119; the card came from the back of a candy box. The original Leader complete box sold by itself for $760. Original art for the cover of Superman Family #193, wrap-around cover art by Ross Andru and Dick Giordano, from 1978—the original art is on one large 15" x 19 1/2" board—sold for $1850. Neal Adams public service announcement Superman page from 1976-77 sold for $1325. Superman lunch box from 1954, $535. Wayne Boring original pencil layout/sketch for published art of his Studio Ad measuring 8 by 10 inches sold for $500.

Bronze Age Blockbusters: An issue of Hulk #181 CGC 9.8 has sold for $18,156.31; a VG issue of Uncle Scrooge #179 sold for $255 (3.35X Guide); an issue of Uncle Scrooge #179 (still in the Whitman pre-pack bag) recently sold for $1,500 (3X NM Guide) and another unopened Whitman pre-pack (see eBay listing #2154230889) with the Holy Grail of Donald Duck #222, Uncle Scrooge #179 and WDC&S #480 was halted mid-sale. The Buy It Now price was advertised at $2499.99. Inquiries to the seller have gone unanswered.

The latest buzz on many Internet comic forums has been about the Nic Cage Marvel #33 that inexplicably permutated from a CGC 8.0 to a 9.2 after the purchaser (a professional restorer) took the pencil mark off and pressed the book and then resubmitted to CGC—forgetting to mention to CGC that it was the same Nic Cage book that they had previously graded! According to the owner of the book "...everyone seems to have a differing view on what constitutes restoration. There is no set standard, only opinions." There was some doubt raised as to whether this was the same MM #33—however Stephen Fishler of Metropolis Comics vouches that it was the same book—in fact, he sold the Nic Cage book to Cage personally!

Almost three years ago the American Association of Comicbook Collectors circulated a petition at the San Diego Comic Con: International asking whether restoration and/or restoration removal should be disclosed to a buyer. Many of the top dealers, collectors, Price Guide Advisors, publishers and hobbyists signed the petition agreeing with its concept.

It looks like (contrary to what the collecting public is being told) that restoration "removal" is proceeding full speed ahead without disclosure. They can talk all they want about conservation versus restoration, but when a professional restorer is hired to have this sort of work done and then it is not disclosed when submitted to the grading service, collectors, dealers and auction houses appear to be intentionally misleading the buying public—perhaps even committing fraud!

Wouldn't we all like to clean those rusty staples, remove glue, stickers and mold, and then be able to declare the book a 9.6! Is there a responsibility to disclose restoration when you submit a book to the grading service if you personally know work was done on the book? Gasp! Choke! Gag! Ethical Responsibility by hobbyists? Guess that begs the question (yet again!)—what exactly is restoration? Removal of a pencil mark? Pressing? Non-Disclosure of a known pedigree or collection?

A meeting of Price Guide Advisors and restoration experts is desperately needed to define and quantify this restoration question. Failure to do so will lead the hobby down a dangerous and slippery slope that might have catastrophic financial consequences for many and hobby threatening repercussions for all.

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CBM Market Watch

A Report of Market Indicator Sales (Including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman

Batman

#12	VF	$1125	62%
#19	FN	$335	57%
#26	VG	$250	83%
#33	VG	$102	43%
#42	VG	$204	83%
#66	GD	$83	Guide
#71	VG	$92	75%
#75	VG	$95	78%
#87	VG	$66	58%
#101	FN	$88	58%

Captain Marvel Adventures

#101	FN	$33	46%
#43	VG	$78	98%

Conan

#1	FN	$51	71%

Fantastic Four Special

#5	VF	$60	82%

Gene Autry

#5	GD	$18	Guide

Green Lantern

#87	VF	$33	1.14X
#68	NM	$40	73%

Haunted Thrills

#5	VF	$110	72%

Hawkman

#1	VG	$41	41%

Hulk

#102	VF	$149	97%
#102	VF	$109	71%
#181	FN	$283	1.37X
#181	VF	$305	52%

Iron Man & Sub-Mariner

#1	VF	$56	55%

Jimmy Olsen

#9	VF	$208	79%
#11	VF	$235	1.35X

Journey into Mystery

#84	VG+	$135	77%

Jungle

#107	GD	$20	1.05X

Kamandi

#1	NM	$37	62%
#1	NM	$38	60%
#1	NM	$40	67%
#1	NM	$39	65%

Leading

#2	GD	$155	95%

Lois Lane

#13	VG	$31	91%

Marge's Little Lulu

#1	VF	$158	36%
#2	VF	$130	64%

Miss Fury

#4	VG	$182	83%

Plastic Man (GA)

#3	VF	$258	39%

Real Fact Comics

#3	VG	$19	25%
#4	VG-	$20	24%

Rulah

#27	VF	$135	45%

Strange Adventures

#1	GD	$179	72%
#25	FN	$79	71%

Strange Tales

#77	VF	$125	1.02X
#96	VF	$66	63%
#110	VG	$134	67%
#132	VF	$18	45%
#149	VF	$10	38%
#150	VF	$10	34%
#154	VF	$13	42%
#160	VF	$10	34%
#64	GD	$20	1.11X

Sub-Mariner (GA)

#34	VF	$330	70%
#37	VG	$114	78%
#39	VG	$105	72%

Superboy

#48	VG	$16	29%
#68	GD	$28	51%
#78	VG	$19	44%
#90	VF	$25	40%
#61	FN	$21	44%
#63	FN	$28	58%
#78	VF-	$29	26%
#80	FN	$31	57%

Supergirl

#1	NM	$57	1.27X
#1	NM	$54	1.2X

Superman

#64	VG	$58	48%
#284	NM-	$36	1.03X
#3	GD	$695	98%
#9	GD	$250	87%
#161	VF	$19	29%
#168	VF	$29	58%
#171	VF	$46	92%
#173	VF	$34	68%
#174	VF	$39	78%
#175	VF	$32	64%
#178	VF	$31	62%

Superman Family

#166	VF+	$25	1.32X
#167	VF+	$25	1.32X
#169	VF+	$25	1.32X

T-Man

#1	GD-	$49	1.23X
#27	VG	$24	1.2X

Tales of Suspense

#1	VG	$200	76%
#2	VG	$122	1.22X
#3	VG	$110	1.10X
#4	VG	$110	1.28X
#7	VG	$78	1.11X
#39	VF	"$1275"	45%
#39	GD	$300	95%
#47	VF-	$102	61%
#58	FN	$41	49%
#59	VF	$90	46%
#63	VF-	$90	57%
#65	VF	$51	49%
#83	NM	$55	Guide
#89	NM	$47	85%
#91	NM	$51	93%
#93	NM	$30	55%
#94	VF	$20	59%
#94	NM	$56	1.02X
#95	NM	$32	58%
#96	NM	$19	35%
#97	NM	$32	58%
#43	VG+	$38	56%
#59	VG	$27	48%

Tales of Unexpected

#80	FN	$15	71%

Tales to Astonish

#57	VF	$35	33%
#73	NM	$41	75%
#100	NM	$48	74%
#100	VF	$22	55%

Tarzan

#60	NM	$45	69%
#21	VG+	$32	1.21X

Teen Titans

#6	VF	$10	26%
#8	VF-	$14	38%

Tender Love Stories

#1	FN	$20	2.22X

Terry and the Pirates

#21	FN	$30	Guide

Texas Kid

#1	VF+	$210	1.61X

Tim Holt

#11	FN	$100	78%

Two-Fisted Tales

#30	VG	$16	47%

Uncle Scrooge

#85	VF	$15	52%
#91	NM	$10	22%
#180	NM	$40	Guide

Whiz

#100	VG	$101	1.74X
#113	GD	$36	1.5X

Wonder Woman

#2	GD	$750	2.14X
#25	VG	$183	1.09X
#27	VG	$170	Guide
#37	GD	$72	1.22X
#196	NM	$90	2.57X

World's Finest

#8	GD	$175	99%
#9	GD	$350	1.75X
#10	GD	$170	1.07X
#132	VF	$30	60%

X-Men

#7	VF-	$96	41%
#10	VF	$163	65%
#12	VF	$91	36%
#13	VF	$58	30%
#23	VF-	$27	31%
#26	VF	$25	28%
#28	VF+	$95	81%
#29	VF-	$22	25%
#39	VF	$23	35%
#46	VF	$41	71%
#51	VF	$27	45%
#58	VF	$50	68%
#66	VF	$41	73%
#71	VF	$10	38%

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Congratulations! WOW, is it 100 issues already? It is amazing how much has happened in that dozen or so years. The world of Comic Collecting has flip-flopped so much we almost feel wind burnt. CBM began quietly in the post Batman Movie #1 era. That era did not change much for over ten years. New comics were about to hit their biggest book, and then crash. Popular titles ruled the day and we just needed to decide if we wanted Golden or Silver Age back issues. Bronze Age was not yet coined and most books of the era had little value.

Collectors eagerly awaited the monthly Overstreet and Wizard was making big inroads in the price guide department. The monthly guides were the only way to get a handle on the current market, for most collectors. Quick buck artists made it and lost it.

From 1990 through 1993 the number of comic stores and new comic print runs exploded. Collectors and dealers from Sports Cards and other markets entered the comic hobby. Everyone believed they would get rich off new comics. Death of Superman, gimmick covers, Image and Valiant became the biggest crazes of the era. CBM quietly continued bringing superb coverage of the Vintage Comics Market.

The New Comics Boom turned to one of the biggest crashes ever. Most of the comics of 1990-1995 will have pulp paper value only, for many years to come. CBM escalated its coverage and began to set a new standard for coverage on vintage comics. As the Overstreet monthly guide disappeared, we were left with a void in reliable Market Reports, beyond the yearly Guide. CBM filled this void and much more, becoming one of the most important and collected of all fanzines.

Info on the mid-'90s trends was best found in the pages of CBM. The Oddball Comics Back-Issue Craze can be traced through the pages of CBM. The Oddball Comics trend resurrected a near dead market. Internet and eBay came next, with comics proving to be one of the most popular collectibles on eBay. Finally, CGC came along to give investors confidence in their holdings. Confidence has increased liquidity, but also fostered greed. Investors are back in spades, thanks to CGC. Readers and collectors are back in force too. Even CGC has cooled, having lost its novelty, and settling into a permanent part of the marketplace.

CBM has seen, reported and forecasted it all in its pages, proving to be one of the most indispensable forums to serious collectors and fans. I now look forward to being around for issue 200 and all the yet undreamed of changes and fads yet to come in our addictive hobby and passions!

Onto a quick Market Report: Recently we have experienced buyers asking for many 30+-year-old comics, and turning down VF, VF+ and VF/NM copies, instead choosing to wait for "High Grade" copies! Today's strictly graded VF is the NM copy of 1990, thus VF copies are superb copies. Thus, the latest fever to hit the market is "High Grade" fever. As we have seen many times in the past, the worst time to buy is at the peek of the market. Prices inevitably slow and those who buy too high, lose. Try not to overpay to get the "World's Finest Graded Copy"! (Think, "What will happen if others come along, graded the same or higher?") Remember, under 1 in 5000 comics still existing are yet to be graded by CGC. VF to VF/NM copies are still a real bargain, can be easily had near Guide and are beautiful copies to boot.

My Website continues to grow, now 3500+ pages, as we endlessly list items for the first time ever. The trend is what I have believed in for over 20 years now. Scarcer items, with low competition, will always sell themselves. I have always gone out of my way to carry all the titles that the other dealers avoid. These are now consistently among my bestsellers. If the item itself is scarce, in any grade, then condition is less of a factor in value and salability. In Silver Age, a "find" of VG Millie the Models and Josies is consistently more exciting than VF Daredevils and Spider-Mans! Among our bestsellers are: Archie, Charlton, Harvey, Digests, Fanzines, Paperbacks, Westerns, War, Cartoon, Foreign, Parody, Love and Warren. This goes well beyond comics into all other collectibles too. Non-Comic Paperbacks, Pulps and Magazines are fast growing markets, also currently ruled by scarcity! Who would have guessed Gor #25 (1988) and Doc Savage #125/126 (1985) paperbacks would one day sell for $150 each in VF??? Or Nora Roberts' '80s Royal Trilogy paperback romances at $25 $50 each?? Yes, we even sell lots of K-Tel records at $10+ each! How about late 1960s Mini-Bike mags at $35-$75 each?

We also take note that there is a much bigger demand for low-end affordable and cheapest-available copy over top grade pricey items. Investors typically choose well-known mainstream items in High Grade over obscure items. Yes, I like dealing with the investors too, but have more fun dealing with fans who love the comics for what they are. I cannot recommend obscure and oddball scarcer items enough. The fun of the hunt and the info you learn as you follow the trail are an unbeatably rewarding combination.

Al Stoltz

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After starting up the New Year with a local show and eBay sales, I can only say that things are a bit brighter so far for 2003 in comparison to the end of 2002. A show that occurs in Tyson's Corner, VA proved to be far more crowded than ever and Santa must have dropped some extra cash in a few stockings this year. We only brought bargain material and gave the better inventory a break for a change but did manage to sell a few older pieces along with every $5 comic that we brought to the show.

Ebay has been pretty decent lately for us, and a batch of CGC graded material fetched a few dollars for us. A copy of Astonishing Tales #25 graded 9.8, which has the famous first appearance of Deathlok and the first George Perez art, brought $429. This, according to the CGC census, was one of the top graded copies done so far. I personally think that this price is insane and far above the $40 for NM Guide but if the magic numbers above 9.6 mean something to another buyer then so be it.

With a weak start to the year as far as limited shows, I can only hope that my mail order holds its own and is at least as good as last year and I will be very happy. Heard a rumor that VG will have its own column in the upcoming Guide. This will set forever that murky price range in the same formula that was figured for the VF price break that was introduced last year. I really do not see it as a bad thing and actually see that it will make pricing books that much easier.

I have sent a number of scans into Overstreet this year of books that I have found that were not listed in the Guide; I never get a response but hope that the info that was sent in was used and made available for others.

Recent eBay sales: Marvel Mystery #24 (R) GD $225; Blue Beetle #51 GD $76; Fantastic Four #1 GD- $810; Showcase #7 (Challengers) GD- $51; Amazing Spider-Man #129 (Cover Detached) GD $20; Atomic Mouse #1 GD- $16; Action Comics Giveaway VG+ $420. #93 CFO $31; It Rhymes With Lust GD+ $305; Nick Fury Agent Of Shield #14 CGC 9.2 $40; Star Spangled War Stories #148 CGC 9.4 $108; Journey Into Mystery #121 CGC 9.0 $103; Daredevil #158 CGC 9.4 $152; Plastic Man #23 CGC 8.0 $190; Peanuts #1GK CGC 9.0 $157.

At the one show we have done so far this year: Peanuts #2-4 GK File Copies $300 for the lot; Felix The Cat 1931 book in VF- $350; A Christmas Carol hard cover, rare King Feature book FN-/VF $150; Green Lantern #3 VG+ $67.

Barry's Collectors Corner

1911 S. Washington
Grand Forks, ND 58201

The market for new comics has been decreasing at a steady pace for the past two years. Comic-save customers have been on a steady decline. As one expert once said: "Nearly every save customer will let you down eventually." I did not believe that when I first heard it, but it is true. As customers graduate and change jobs, they leave with no notice. I do not see much change in my market over the next few years. Younger customers are not coming in and regular customers are dwindling.

Predictable titles still sell OK, like miscellaneous X-men, Amazing and Ultimate Spider-Man, Wolverine, G.I. Joe, Transformers and the current Batman. The sell quantities have dropped drastically over the past five years. Back issue sales are also very select these days. Amazing Spider-Man before #130, with few exceptions, is easy to sell and hard to acquire. Older titles like Westerns, TV/Movie comics, and miscellaneous Golden Age are steady and also difficult to find.

The back issue that has surprised me with its sales has been Magnus Robot Fighter. It's a title I read and enjoyed and now I am selling off parts of that collection with surprising success. When considering all of my back-issue sales, I have had success selling reading copies and higher-grade comics. Most customers are not looking at the middle ground.

Recent sales include a low grade Dr. Who movie comic $28; nicer 1960s TV titles around $10 each; Magnus Robot Fighter $5-$20; nice Our Army at War Sgt. Rock's $10; low-grade 1950s Atlas titles $5-10; and Amazing Spider-Man #129 VG/F $100.

Robert Letscher II

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I still remember getting that complimentary copy of Comic Book Marketplace #1. Thinking, "Darn, this thin rag is just ads!", and wondering if anyone would even contribute, or advertise, based on that. Well, fortunately for us all, issue 2 came out, and dispelled all doubt; I was immediately hooked, and have faithfully purchased every issue since! (Subscriptions are a real value, and mighty convenient.) The genuine article, CBM remains the only mag dedicated to comics and related collectibles.

Not just a colorful rag designed to pump the latest card game or trendy fad, but a real magazine for true readers and collectors, written by knowledgeable fellow fans! Although there have been changes in staff and format, along with a couple breaks in publication, every issue has continued to both inform and entertain. And isn't that what it takes for

a fan mag to reach this lofty hundred-issue anniversary milestone? Congrats CBM on a run well done; here's to another hundred!

Now back to comics: The market has remained strong overall, although there has been a mild reduction in prices realized for the CGC-graded books which fall below the "top graded copy." This could very well be due to the abundance of graded material available in the market currently. (When eBayers see a few thousand CGC comics for sale each week on eBay, the novelty wears off plenty fast. So some decide to just try for the very finest copies, leaving plenty of bargains to be found for fans who don't mind owning a mere "9.2", for example.)

Here are a few recent sales of CGC-Graded Comics: Brave and the Bold #79 CGC NM- 9.2 $100; The Maxx #1 Glow-In-The-Dark NM/MT 9.8 $51; Spiderwoman #1 CGC NM/MT 9.8 $109; Sojourn Prequel #1 CGC NM/MT 9.8 $57; Machine Man #1 CGC NM+ 9.6 $48; DC vs. Marvel #1 CGC NM+ 9.6 $36, #1 CGC NM 9.4 $20; Batman The Dark Knight Returns #4 CGC NM+ 9.6 $43; Beware The Creeper #5 CGC NM 9.4 $210; Hawkman #25 CGC VF/NM 9.0 $100; Tomb Of Terror #11 CGC VF+ 8.5 $200; Miss Fury #7 CGC VF 8.0 $575; Submariner #1 CGC VF 8.0 $120; Young Allies #6 CGC FN/VF 7.0 $450; Seven Seas #1 CGC FN 6.0 $350.

Sales of DC production art from the Jack Adler Collection remain strong, with demand high for all genres with the exception of the humor oriented titles such as Debbi/Binky/Scooter. A few examples from the last few weeks include: Strange Adventures #241 Cover Four-Color Separation $150; Our Army At War #235 Cover Four-Color Separation $140; Love Stories #149 Hand-Colored Cover Art $150; Falling In Love #131 Hand-Colored Cover Art $130; Young Romance #190 Untrimmed Final Test Cover $75; Date With Debbi #18 Hand-Colored Cover Art $80; Korak, Son Of Tarzan #56 Hand-Colored Cover Art $180; Four Star Battle Tales #3 Approval Cover $90; Swamp Thing #6 Approval Cover $150; World's Finest #209 Hand-Colored Cover Art $200; Strange Adventures #239 Approval Cover $100.

The release of the blockbuster Spider-Man movie on DVD, with all its extra material relating to the comics, has given the Spidey craze a second wind. We are now cleaned out on almost all of the first 150 issues of Amazing Spiderman, and sales of the more plentiful issues after #150 are pretty consistent, with all grades finding happy new homes. I hope future comic-based DVDs will continue to promote their four-color heritage!

Well, duty calls. But, in closing, I want to encourage fans to take advantage of the great selection of back-issues available in the market lately to fill in the holes in your favorite runs while they are available. Too often I hear people complain, "I saw a few copies offered for sale last year, and thought I'd be able to fill it in later, but now they seem rare. (or too expensive!)." I say: You can always upgrade later, so if you see a decent copy for a bargain price, offered by a reputable seller, (or a seller with a good feedback profile, if you are using eBay), then I say buy with glee! And if it's a scarcer book, or piece of art, then you may want to bid aggressively, because it may be quite a while before the item is made available again. Keep up the good work, CBM!

Jamie Newbold

SoCal Comics
8280 Clairemont Mesa Blvd #124
San Diego, CA 92111
858-715-8669

CBM #100! Now, that's hard to believe. I didn't think we'd ever see #88, let alone #100. Thanks to Russ and the staff, they have kept a comic cult favorite continuing through iffy times. I've only been a reader for about six years, long after CBM established its niche in the comic book world. I've found it a remarkable read for those last six years. Yet, I'm amazed more people in our hobby don't pick it up. The esoteric history and information put forth in each issue is reason enough to read it. I've learned more about the characters and history of the work behind the scenes than anywhere else in the hobby. There's just so much to know and CBM is the place to know it! Thanks CBM!

Golden Age Sales: Daredevil #3 GD $300; Mutt & Jeff 27 FN+ $35.

Silver Age Sales: All-American Men Of War #47 VG $30; Amazing Spider-Man #14 FN $425, #15 FN- $141, #19 VG+ $75, #45 CGC 9.0 $150, #99 CGC 9.0 $90; Avengers #1 FN+ $700, #5 FN- $71; Avengers Annual #1 FN $24; Fantastic Four #13 VG $85, #49 F/VF $136, #50 FN+ $112; Forever People #1 NM $65; In The Days Of The Mob #1 VF $60; Iron Man #1 VG $82; Iron Man/Submariner #1 FN $42; Superman #114 G/VG $81; X-Men #4 F/VF $260.

Bronze Age Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #131 NM $30, #200 NM $30; Detective Comics #440 NM- $55; Giant-Size X-Men #1 FN $180; IronMan #55 VF/NM $84; Supergirl #1 NM $45, #3 NM $20.

Bob Storms

212-429-5861
RCSBLAZING@aol.com

The last two months of 2002 were extremely explosive for sales. Very nice orders ranging from $100-$3000 were made. Prior to November I had three extremely slow shows.

Of course a beautiful original owner collection of DCs from 1959-1961 helped: Flash #105 CGC 9.2; Justice League #1 CGC 9.2; Green Lantern #1 9.0; Our Army at War #81; Action #252 CGC 9.0 were some of the highlights.

Marvels are still selling and I've had a number of keys come in as well. AF #15 8.0; Avengers #1 8.5, #3 9.0; DareDevil #1 9.2; Journey Into Mystery #83 9.0;

Tales of Suspense #39 8.0; X-Men #1 7.5 and 9.0.

Keep checking out the site as lots of new material will be added throughout the coming months. Thanks for the support!

Richard Olson

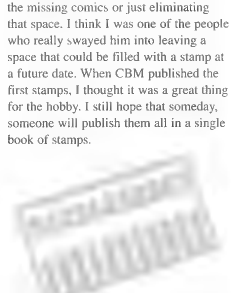
40 Infinity Drive
Poplarville, MS 39470-9006

When I first started collecting comics in the early 1950s, a book 10-15 years old was really an old book. Now that I have been collecting for over 50 years, a 10-15 year old book is a "new" book and the old books are those from the turn of the century and before! Naturally such books are very rare in any condition, and most collectors of Platinum and Victorian books I know are happy to find a book in any condition for their collection. However, if it also happens to be in VF-NM condition, the sale is quick and easy and the price is rarely a factor. Virtually all of these books are rare and the number of collectors is growing, so I find the market to be very strong. With an early book in nice condition, I can usually sell it with one phone call if I don't want to keep it for my own collection.

Recent oblong sales: VF+ copies of the Buster Brown Paint Book No. 1 and No. 2 for $2500; a poor-fair copy, but complete, of Pore Li'l Mose for $1,000. Between Stokes and Cupples and Leon, there are about 20 Buster Brown oblongs, with the ones published toward the end of the series being generally rarer. The early issues seem to have been reprinted in various sizes and shapes, and number of pages, so unless you are trying to get one of each variant, they aren't too hard to find and usually sell for about $300 or more in VG/F condition. A growing interest in these books has brought a lot of them out of attics and trunks, and I don't think they are nearly as rare as originally believed.

This has also happened with a lot of early comic ephemera. Yellow Kid pinbacks and gum cards don't sell very well any more unless they are in great condition. Rarer items, however, like mechanical dolls, posters, and sheet music still sell very well. A 12"x18" R. F. Outcault Yellow Kid poster with a large image sold for $3500. Yellow Kid cap bomb heads are still selling on eBay for $50-$250 depending on who is bidding. The red porcelain Pulver Yellow Kid gum machine, however, rarely sells for more than $1000 unless it is in beautiful condition. In general, condition seems to be more important for the early ephemera than the early comic books, which I imagine is due to the cross-over collectors increasing the demand for the item and adding to the scarcity of the best objects. As is always the case, the nicer, rarer, and thus more expensive an item, the easier it is to sell! It will be interesting to see how our failing economy impacts the hobby in the months ahead.

Remembrances: One of my favorite memories of CBM was the first issue I saw that had stamps for missing comics in Gerber's books. I had helped Ernie by taking pictures of many early reprint comics, and remember that we had a discussion about leaving a blank space for the missing comics or just eliminating that space. I think I was one of the people who really swayed him into leaving a space that could be filled with a stamp at a future date. When CBM published the first stamps, I thought it was a great thing for the hobby. I still hope that someday, someone will publish them all in a single book of stamps.



Opinions expressed in CBM "Market Reports" are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

BACK ISSUE DEPARTMENT

These issues are available...

#52	Archie, All-Star, Schwartz Part III, Fox	$8
#58	Lost in Space, Weisinger, Basil Wolverton!	$10
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#72	Iron Man & Subby, Larry Lieber Part I	$8
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#87	George Evans, Detectives Inc.	$8
#88	Murphy Anderson, Rudolph the Reindeer	$8
#89	Hal Foster, Frank Cho, George Perez Part II	$8
#90	Patriotic issue, Bob Lubbers, George Perez Part III	$8
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#95	Disney strip art, Miracleman	$8
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Sp#5	Spider-Man, Gerber Stickers	$12
#97	Curt Swan, T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents	$8
#98	Western: Ayers, Ingels, Severin	$8

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[continued from page 6]

#19, I passed on buying an issue. I have been increasingly disheartened with the shrinking market reports and quality articles on golden and atomic age books and the increased focus on strip art. I just don't think it belongs in a magazine called *Comic Book Marketplace*.

The interviews with current day creators disappoint me too, as that is what *Wizard* is for, which I do not buy. I only hope things turn around, and will keep my eye on the mag, but I can't support the high cover price of something that leaves me cold. It seems like losing an old friend.

On an up-note, I really like the layout design by the guy who does *Monsters from the Vault*—I felt it added a zippy touch to the mag. As for what I would like to see: Pre-code horror information, articles on Matt Fox, Matt Baker, Bill Everett, Classic Disney comics (coming up from what I read), obscure GA heroes and niche things like Hitler covers, bondage covers, holiday covers, *SOTI* and the like. Thanks for listening,

Matthew Kirscht
via e-mail

Thanks for writing, Matthew. We are pleased as punch with our new feature layout editor, Michael Kronenberg—and his work is one part of CBM *that has not been getting mixed reviews—everyone agrees that he has made a positive contribution to the "look" of* CBM. *In this issue, notice the new logo he designed for us and the new department headings. Hats off to Michael for all his fine work!*
RC

Knock on Wood

This letter is in regard to the article "Days of T.H.U.N.D.E.R" which was written by Todd Severin. In the article Severin asserts that Wally Wood was a heroin addict. This statement, according to several people who knew Wood very well, is completely false. Bill Pearson, executor of the Wood estate and publisher of *Witzend*, says it is a total fabrication. The writer Nicola Cuti, who knew Wood for over ten years, states, "He had a drinking problem and was a heavy smoker but he absolutely never indulged in hard drugs like heroin." A.L. Sirois was Wood's assistant in the mid-seventies and an extended family member. Wood married the mother of Sirois' wife; this was Muriel, Wood's third wife. Sirois says "The idea that Woody used hard drugs like that is utter and complete nonsense."

I don't know where Severin heard this rumor, but obviously it is totally unsubstantiated. I suggest you check your writers' "facts" more closely in the future. Regards,

Dave Newton
via e-mail

Thanks for setting the record straight on Wally Wood. I take the responsibility for this, as editor I should have caught this error, but it slipped past me. Because of my long experience working with Bill Gaines and the EC Comics, I knew that Wally had been a heavy drinker, but as far as I know he was not a hard drug user. Apologies to Wally and his memory.
RC

Daze of thunder

Issue 97 [was] quite an issue, maybe the best to date. In fact I would free up some shelf space in the Time Capsule as this issue is walking in on its own. Great *T.A.* #3 repro and fantastic center splash by Ordway. In fact we have been blessed now by two great Thunder Agent treatments in the last 18 months—first *CBA* and now *CBM* (the *CBA* issue was #14, July 2001). I liked the two-prong attack where the past history is paired up with future possibilities of our heroes to live anew. I have seen the DC Archives Edition and it is very good. Special touches such as a nice foreword, complete credits and a biography add to a fine package. That being said, for some reason almost all of these hardcover editions suffer from the same malady. The color always seems to be too bright for the paper used; as well, you wonder if the art being fine-tuned in the process is related to the paper not matching up well? (Russ, could you wade in on this one?). If a new series does fly I wonder how much say John Carbonaro is going to have on the quality control? I hope they just don't assemble all their writers and artists into a hall and ask who's free that week, stranger things have happened.

Regarding Curt Swan, loved that feature and the Jim Shooter article (you don't hear much about him anymore). Michelle also did a nice change of pace feature and I wonder what moniker future generations will use to describe the current state of the comic book?

Last, there was one line of comment in the "Letter from the Editor" column I didn't agree with. You guessed it, the Survey. Russ, you may want to take a seat, while I take over the class for a second. Number one, filling out a survey is not one of the great pleasures in life; number two, by definition what you presented us with was not a survey, in reality it was an assignment. A very long assignment. I would have had to reread every article in the last year or two to do this survey justice. That, my friend, is not going to happen. Number three, all you needed were four questions or areas to obtain a result: (1) circle your primary and secondary periods (of comic history) you like the best, (2) What do you like the best in *CBM* on a monthly basis? (3) What do you dislike the most of the features presented? and (4) How would you like to see the magazine evolve or develop over time?

Russ, I didn't mean to take you to task over this but when you intimated 95% of the readership didn't care (I

know you didn't mean that) I had to respond. Now it's time for my break, take over the class.

Mike Egan
via e-mail

Yes, I agree with you about the survey. It could have been a lot shorter and to the point, and the fact that less than 5% of our readers responded might just mean that we have lazy readers. But I do read and think about each and every letter we get here at CBM, *and we try to print more of the complaining letters than the pats-on-the-back, which we love to get!*

RC

Amicus curiae curiosity

I wonder if anyone else noticed the quote by Supreme Court Justice Scalia reported in the *New York Times* (1/13/03) re: his criticism that the US Constitution is being interpreted too liberally, "It is a Constitution that morphs while you look at it like Plasticman [sic]" (well, even Supreme Court Justices can't always be grammatically correct, I suppose).

Although it is nice that someone of such a high standing remembers Plas (I wonder how many younger readers of the *Times* had any idea what he was referring to?), I'm a bit disturbed by the negative connotations implied. Was the swipe at the comic book character unintentional (if a bit outdated; wouldn't "like Mr. Fantastic" have connected with more people)? Is Plastic Man, a reformed criminal, being held up as an example of liberalism? Would that make unreformed criminals conservatives? Fascinating.

Chris Boyko
New York, NY

The input of Art Spiegelman (and Barsotti, Mouly, Feiffer, Steadman, et al.) at The New Yorker *has made the comic art awareness of that influential magazine rise to an all-time high; and Spiegelman's especial interest in Jack Cole and Plastic Man has been particularly high profile. That may be the explanation.*

Ed Rock

For Mike Wilbur

Hi, Mike, I regularly enjoy your articles on comic character statues in CBM. As a longtime comic book and art collector I find they add a new dimension to my hobby and allow for some unique displays. I've attached a jpeg of one for your perusal. Let me know if you'd like to see any others. Take care,

Tom Morehouse
via e-mail

It's always good to hear from someone who "gets it."

This is a great example for those who keep shutting themselves off from a whole facet of collecting that can enhance and enrich their collecting experience, as this photo demonstrates. Thanks,

Mike

Letter perfect

I've been a subscriber to *CBM* since the first issue.

Lately I've noticed a disturbing trend in your editorship…mainly, the incredibly shrinking size of the letter column. I have to write, since the latest issue contains no letters at all!

The column is my one contact with fandom at large. Without it I have no idea what my fellow collectors are loving or hating. As far as I personally am concerned, *CBM* would be most fun to read if at least one-third of it was comprised solely of L.O.C.s. Please bring it back!!! I'm 54 and have been involved in fandom since 1963. My first zine purchase was *Rocket's Blast* #13…I still have it.

Dan Fleming

Dan, this column is also one of my favorites. We love getting letters, even critical ones, and you are seeing all of the interesting ones. If there are not many letters in a given issue, it just means we did not receive many that month. I wish more of our readers would write. I see some of our readers making posts on internet chat rooms about comics, sometimes with complaints—we would prefer to see these complaints come as direct letters to us, so we can address them. We are not going to agree with every letter-writer out there, but we firmly believe in their right to be heard and we have never shied away from printing a critical letter. Remind me to tell you the story of Mrs. Arlene Grandon Phelan sometime.

RC

In all modesty

I for one, appreciate the efforts you are making in your role as *CBM*'s new editor, building upon the solid groundwork laid out by your predecessor, Gary Carter.

I think it was a brave decision to accommodate both newspaper and comic book strips under one roof—but upon reflection it seems like a perfectly logical idea to me. After all, doesn't the origin of the American comic book lie with the reprinting of material directly taken from the newspaper strip (as pioneered by Harry Wildenberg and Max Gaines in the 1930s)?

Personally, I enjoy the majority of features printed under the *CBM* banner. For me, comic strips are not just about nostalgia or series I currently read. Thanks to magazines such as *CBM*, I enjoy learning about the histories of those strips I have little or no knowledge about. I removed my blinders years ago when I began to tire of the super-hero dominated market. Nowadays, my interests are mostly aesthetics-driven (a bias towards beautifully illustrated artwork), and I find myself drawn towards comic strips that saw print years before I was even born. For example, EC comics and also, from my own country, Frank Hampson's outstanding science-fiction strip, "Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future." I discovered these gems via reprints. Quality will always transcend time and touch a new generation.

In a past issue of *CBM* you ran a feature on the classic British newspaper strip, *Modesty Blaise*. What is perhaps unknown to many enthusiasts of the strip is that Jim Holdaway was not the first choice of artist to be considered for the strip. In 1962, at the invitation of Kennedy Aitken, then strip cartoons editor for Beaverbrook Newspapers, another artist was asked to submit samples for the proposed *Modesty Blaise* strip—a tryout artist whose work on the strip predates that of Holdaway: Frank Hampson.

Frank Hampson (1917-1985), creator of the legendary science fiction strip "Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future" for *Eagle Comics* (1950-1969), produced several weeks worth of continuities for Modesty Blaise. Peter O'Donnell, the strip's writer, was reportedly unhappy with Hampson's samples which, he claimed, "totally misunderstood the character." At O'Donnell's request, his former partner on the earlier *Romeo Brown* newspaper strip, Jim Holdaway, was brought in to replace Hampson. The rest is history.

Eight of Hampson's samples have survived to this day, rescued from the back of the artist's old filing cabinets by his old friend (and leading Hampson expert), Alan Vince. These forgotten strips, which I assure you are exquisite, provide a tantalizing glimpse of what might have been.

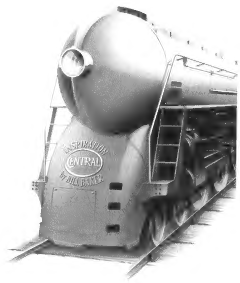
Oh, and in conclusion, can I just say a big "Hello" to my old friend Alan Reeves down in Australia?

Keep up the good work, Russ! Best Wishes,

Terry Doyle
England

Thanks, Terry! Terry is an old friend who has been following my publications for many years. And this letter brings up a question that I want to pose to our readers: Are you interested in seeing articles about British newspaper comics and comic books? This is a two part question—should CBM *be covering the British variants of American comics, like British versions of Marvel comics? And, the other part is, should* CBM *cover British strips which have no American connection?*

RC



Inspiration Central

Don Rosa: Good Things

[continued from page 15]

But I grew up not reading any children's books. I think I read a Hardy Boys book, once. I don't recall thinking much of it. I was too much of a movie fan, and a comics fan. I still remember, even though I was a top student in school, that they couldn't get me to read a book in the summer because that's just not something that I'd do. I would want to read comic books, or watch movies.

So, no, ... no children's authors who had any influence on me. I hear so many good stories about lots of great children's authors nowadays that I wish I had had a family that encouraged me to read books.

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